

May 9, 2023

The Honorable Robert Menendez
United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
United States Senate
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Menendez, Boozman, Schumer, and Collins:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing in strong support of S. 1302, the “Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2023.” This bipartisan legislation would gradually raise the number of Medicare-supported graduate medical education (GME) positions by 2,000 per year for seven years, for a total of 14,000 new slots. A share of these positions would be targeted to hospitals with diverse needs including hospitals in rural areas, hospitals serving patients from health professional shortage areas (HPSAs), especially those hospitals affiliated with historically black medical schools, hospitals in states with new medical schools or branch campuses, and hospitals already training over their caps.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. was already facing a rising shortage of physicians largely due to the growth and aging of the general population and the impending retirement of many physicians.^{1,2} According to the latest data released by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), 100 million people live in primary medical health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) in the U.S.³ HRSA estimates that an additional 37,558 providers are required to eliminate all current primary care, dental, and mental health HPSAs.⁴ Furthermore, in part due to the increased physician burnout associated with COVID-19, there is a projected shortage of between 37,800 and 124,000 physicians by 2034.⁵ This number includes a projected shortage of primary care physicians between 17,800 and 48,000, as well as a shortage of non-primary care specialties between 21,000 and 77,100 physicians.

However, the current and projected physician shortages across the country will never be resolved unless the cap that has been placed on residency slots is raised. When Congress enacted the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 it placed a limit (or cap) on the funding that Medicare would provide for GME. This means that most hospitals receive direct medical education (DGME) funding and indirect medical education

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-findings-confirm-predictions-physician-shortage>.

² <https://www.aamc.org/download/472888/data/physicianworkforceissues.pdf>.

³ <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas>.

⁴ *Id.*

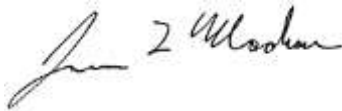
⁵ <https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download>.

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(IME) support only for the number of allopathic and osteopathic full-time equivalent (FTE) residents they were training in 1996. Though we are grateful that bipartisan congressional leaders worked together since 2021 to provide 1,200 new Medicare-supported GME positions – the first such increases in nearly thirty years – more slots are needed to adequately care for our population. As such, until the cap is significantly raised, the shortage of physicians will never be truly resolved. Therefore, it is essential that we invest in our country’s health care infrastructure by providing additional GME slots so that more physicians can be trained and access to care can be improved.

As the largest professional association for physicians and the umbrella organization for state and national specialty medical societies, the AMA is committed to ensuring that there is proper access to physicians for all patients and that physicians are well supported. Numerous House and Senate committees that have direct jurisdiction over graduate medical education are already exploring various ways to alleviate the ongoing health care workforce challenge. Therefore, the AMA strongly supports the passage of the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2023, either as a stand-alone bill or part of a more comprehensive legislative package dedicated to workforce issues, so that our nation’s patients and physicians can have access to the help they need and deserve. The AMA commends your ongoing commitment to this important issue, and we look forward to working with you to further advance this legislation in the 118th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Madara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "M".

James L. Madara, MD