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The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Alexander and Murray:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I want to express our support for S. 192, the “Community and Public Health Programs Extension Act of 2019,” which provides five years of mandatory funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program, Community Health Centers (CHC), Special Diabetes Program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians.

The NHSC program provides funding for health workforce activities that offers scholarships and loan repayment to clinicians in exchange for their service in health professional shortage areas (HPSAs). The THCGME program has helped increase the number of primary care medical and dental residents training in rural and underserved communities by providing graduate medical education funding specifically for training in outpatient health centers. Additionally, CHCs provide invaluable primary care services, largely in areas considered medically underserved.

In the United States, there are currently 1,367 health centers operating at more than 10,400 sites across the country. It is estimated that in 2018 health centers served approximately 28 million patients, including 8.4 million children and 350,000 veterans. Additionally, health centers generate \$24 billion in annual cost-savings for the American health system. Health centers create \$45.6 billion in total economic activity each year within America’s most underserved communities.¹ The “Community and Public Health Programs Extensions Act of 2019” seeks to meaningfully support programs that provide critical and affordable access to primary care and preventative care services for underserved and vulnerable patient populations across the United States. It will ensure that millions of Americans can access health centers for crucial health care needs now and into the future.

The AMA appreciates your leadership on this important issue and we look forward to working with you to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD

¹ http://www.nachc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/AmericasHealthCenters_FINAL.pdf