April 12, 2017

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Health
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Walden and Burgess and Ranking Members Pallone and Green:

We respectfully encourage you to reauthorize the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program, which is set to expire on September 30, 2017, and to set the program on a path for stable and sustainable funding to ensure its future, long-term viability.

Teaching Health Centers (THCs) were established to address the crisis-level shortage of primary care physicians, especially in rural and medically underserved communities. Since then, the program has grown from 63 residents to 742 residents spread across 59 THCs in 27 states and the District of Columbia. THCGME residents will provide more than one million primary care medical visits in 2017 to underserved communities. Regardless of this substantial growth, THCGME made up less than 0.5 percent of the annual federal outlay committed for training physicians in FY2016.

These residents are specifically training in specialties with the largest shortages nationally, including family medicine, general internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, and dentistry. Furthermore, when compared with traditional Medicare GME residents, residents who train at THCs are more likely to practice primary care (82 percent vs. 23 percent) and remain in underserved (55 percent vs. 26 percent) or rural (20 percent vs. 8 percent) communities. It is clear that the well-designed THCGME program not only plays a vital role in training our next generation of primary care physicians, but helps bridge our nation’s physician shortfall.
We recommend that you consider a reauthorization of at least three years to match the length of these residencies and to include a per resident allocation that more truly reflects the cost of training each resident than the current level. Without this reauthorization, THC's across the country could be forced to close, resulting in abrupt disruptions in resident training; potential reductions in patient care, especially for some of our nation's most vulnerable populations; and the end of a successful effort to address primary care shortages.

In 2015, the THCGME program was extended for an additional two years under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 with strong bipartisan support. We believe this vital program deserves a permanent place in our nation's graduate medical education programming and we look forward to working with you to ensure its continued successes.

Sincerely,

Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress

Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress

Robert B. Aderholt  
Member of Congress

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Matthew Cartwright  
Member of Congress

Mo Brooks  
Member of Congress

Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress

Michael Capuano  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress
John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress

Sam Graves  
Member of Congress

Will Hurd  
Member of Congress

Raul Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Lynn Jenkins  
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutierrez  
Member of Congress

Evan Jenkins  
Member of Congress

Denny Heck  
Member of Congress

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress

James Herrera-Beutler  
Member of Congress

Robin Kelly  
Member of Congress

French Hill  
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly  
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress
Steve Pearce  
Member of Congress

Scott Peters  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Bruce Poliquin  
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress

Hal Rogers  
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress

David Rouzer  
Member of Congress

Raul Ruiz  
Member of Congress

Bobby Rush  
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider  
Member of Congress

Jose E. Serrano  
Member of Congress

Terri Sewell  
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress
Bill Shuster
Member of Congress

Mike Simpson
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Thomas Souzzi
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Elise Stefanik
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Steve Stivers
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Mark Takano
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Mike Thompson
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David Valadao
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Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

Richard M. Nolan
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress