

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 2, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McCarthy, McConnell, and Schumer:

As sponsors of bipartisan legislation to reauthorize and increase funding for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program for five years, we write today to urge you to ensure that Congress enacts this legislation before adjourning in December. The last two-year extension of the THCGME program ended on September 30, 2019. Since then, Congress has extended the program six times for periods ranging from 11 days to six months. We urge you to provide reliable funding to our nation's teaching health centers (THC) this year.

THCs play a vital role in training the next generation of primary care physicians, with residents handling an estimated one million patient visits annually in rural and urban communities. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of increasing the physician workforce in underserved communities. Putting aside the economic adversity faced by these community health facilities due to COVID-19, it has been extraordinarily difficult for the more than 50 THCs to recruit and operate effectively without the longer term stability our reauthorization bills would provide. We believe THCGME responds to the crisis-level shortage of primary care physicians by delivering doctors to communities where they are needed most.

The funding levels in the reauthorization bills we introduced (H.R. 2815 and S. 1191) accommodate: (1) a realistic increase in the per resident allocation for the more than 700 medical residents and (2) selection of additional sites for and expansion of THC programs. The Energy and Commerce Committee and HELP Committee reported four and five-year reauthorizations, respectively, of THCGME favorably more than a year ago, demonstrating strong bipartisan support for this program.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We would be pleased to discuss this with you at your convenience. In addition, please feel free to have your staff contact Erin Doty (Rep. Ruiz), Kristin Flukey (Rep. McMorris Rodgers), Amy Pellegrino (Sen. Collins), or Katie Rubinger (Sen. Tester) to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

/s/ Susan Collins
SUSAN COLLINS
United States Senator

/s/ Jon Tester
JON TESTER
United States Senator

/s/ Raul Ruiz, M.D.
RAUL RUIZ
United States Representative

/s/ Cathy McMorris Rodgers
CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS
United States Representative