



April 30, 2020

The Honorable David McKinley
2239 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter Welch
2187 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Mckinley and Welch:

On behalf of the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC), I am writing to express our support for H.R. 5924, "A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize a loan repayment program to encourage specialty medicine physicians to serve in rural communities experiencing a shortage of specialty medicine physicians, and for other purposes." Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. It is the exclusive forum for the nation's healthcare leaders to jointly develop policies, plans, and programs to achieve their vision of a 21st century healthcare system that makes affordable high-quality care accessible to all Americans. Members of HLC – hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, post-acute care providers, home care providers, and information technology companies – advocate for measures to increase the quality and efficiency of healthcare through a patient-centered approach.

As you know, America faces a physician shortage upwards of 100,000 physicians by 2030, which could disproportionately affect rural and underserved communities. The 46 million Americans who live in rural areas often have trouble accessing care due to a shortage of healthcare workers and long distances to healthcare services that can be made more challenging by difficult terrain and severe weather. As a result, rural residents overall suffer poorer health outcomes and are at greater risk of dying from heart disease, cancer, unintentional injuries, chronic lower respiratory disease and stroke, than their urban counterparts. Without Congressional action, workforce shortages are likely to worsen and, consequently, the state of health for people in rural areas.

HLC believes this legislation is a great first step to improve access to much-needed specialty care for many Americans in rural areas. Due to the extensive and expensive training required for specialty medicine physicians, this legislation would help overcome financial barriers that discourage physicians from practicing in rural communities. Further, this legislation would create a student loan repayment program for specialty physicians to practice in rural communities for a minimum of six years. Student loan forgiveness programs currently exist through agencies such as the National Health Service Corps,

however, none of them are open to specialty care physicians such as urologists. Therefore, HLC encourages the adoption of this legislation.

In addition to this legislation, Congress should increase funding for Graduate Medical Education (GME) and increase the number of residency positions in both primary and specialty care. HLC also urges Congress to pass the Resident Physician Shortage Act, which would increase the number of GME slots by 15,000 over a five-year period.

Thank you again for your work on H.R. 5924 and your efforts to improve physician shortages. HLC looks forward to continuing to collaborate with you on this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Witchey at (202) 449-3435 or dwitchey@hlc.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary R. Grealy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary R. Grealy
President