



September 14, 2017

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Health
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Burgess:

Thank you for your commitment to supporting our nation's healthcare workforce. As the Subcommittee prepares to hold a hearing on this important topic, the Healthcare Leadership Council (HLC) welcomes the opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

HLC is a coalition of chief executives from all disciplines within American healthcare. Our members – the nation's leading hospitals, academic health centers, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, medical device manufacturers, laboratories, biotech firms, health product distributors, pharmacies, post-acute care providers, and information technology companies – are committed to advancing a consumer-centered healthcare system that values innovation, accessibility, and affordability.

The United States requires a strong and stable healthcare workforce. A growing and aging population, expanded health insurance coverage, and initiatives to improve health outcomes have all led to rising patient demand for healthcare services. To meet this demand, there needs to be a trained and highly skilled workforce that can assist consumers in receiving the care they need to maintain and improve their health. This workforce should feature the use of interdisciplinary healthcare teams where physicians and nonphysician providers work together to improve patient care. HLC asks the Subcommittee to continue to support the below programs under the Public Health Service Act that train these professionals and direct them to serve in the communities that need them the most.

National Health Service Corps

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) offers loan repayment assistance to healthcare providers who practice in underserved areas. More than 10,000 primary care medical, dental, and mental and behavioral health practitioners are currently participating in the NHSC, and more than 10 million people rely on one of these providers for their care. Additionally, the NHSC serves as an effective and efficient

recruiting tool, since many providers continue to practice in underserved areas after they fulfill their NHSC commitment.

Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education

Graduate Medical Education (GME) is critical to training our nation's physicians and ensuring that patients have access to quality care. The Teaching Health Center GME (THCGME) program focuses on training doctors in community-based primary care settings such as in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs). FQHCs bridge coverage and access gaps for vulnerable Americans, and the THCGME program provides care while also educating physicians on how best to treat this population.

Title VII and Title VIII

The Title VII and Title VIII programs aim to improve the supply, diversity, and distribution of the healthcare workforce. Through loans and scholarships to students, as well as grants and contracts to academic institutions and nonprofit organizations, the programs support the training of our country's health professionals.

For example, the Title VII diversity programs increase racial and ethnic minority representation in the health professions by providing academic enrichment and career development. The Title VII primary care and oral health programs expand the primary care workforce, and community-based linkage initiatives, like the Area Health Education Centers, facilitate community-based training. Together, these programs play an important role in the healthcare safety net by ensuring a supply of well-trained health professionals who are more likely to serve in rural and underserved areas and FQHCs.

The Title VIII programs are committed to providing support to nurses and nursing students. They are the largest source of federal funding for nursing education, and help to recruit and retain nurses to serve in rural and underserved areas. This assistance is greatly needed as our country's nursing shortage continues to grow and as nurses take on an expanded role in the healthcare team.

Thank you again for your support of the healthcare workforce. HLC looks forward to continuing to work with you on this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Withey at (202) 449-3435.

Sincerely,



Mary R. Grealy
President