

January 6, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear House and Senate Leadership:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge Congress to include funding that invests in our nation's health professional education system as it begins seeking a consensus on ideas for stimulating the U.S. economy. Areas facing serious health professional shortages are affected first and hardest in an economic downturn, given their diminished capacity to serve a community with increasing needs. We view inclusion of health professional training funding in the economic stimulus package as mission-critical to the strength of our nation at this time.

Local hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, community health centers, clinics, and other facilities across the country that provide health care services are experiencing dramatic shortages of critical health professionals to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Yet, health professional schools are struggling to increase student capacity to meet the current demand because of budget constraints, limited classroom and other instruction space, a lack of faculty, and technological limitations. An immediate injection of funding to increase the capacity of existing health professional programs and create new programs to train health professionals in colleges and universities across the nation meets both the goal of improving access to health care services for Americans and providing necessary job training opportunities in these tough economic times. This is especially true in rural areas where the provision of health services is often the foundation of a strong economy. We appreciate and follow the interest many of your Congressional colleagues have in this investment. Senators Ben Nelson, Susan Collins, Debbie Stabenow, Kit Bond, Jeff Bingaman, Olympia Snowe, John Kerry, Roger Wicker, Blanche Lincoln, Lisa Murkowski, and Jon Tester recently sent a letter requesting infrastructural spending for health care facilities and health professional programs in the stimulus package.

Federal investment at this time in health professional training programs will have an immediate job creation impact in local economies and open up new career opportunities for displaced workers in fields with high demand and diminished capacity. As Congress works to restore our nation's economy, we ask that this essential investment be part of the stimulus package and look forward to working with you to ensure its inclusion.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Audiology
American Academy of Physicians Assistants
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Chiropractic Association
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American Dietetic Association
American Health Care Association
American Nurses Association

American Occupational Therapy Association
American Optometric Association
American Organization of Nurse Executives
American Physical Therapy Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
American Society of Radiologic Technologists
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric &
Neonatal Nurses