

March 4, 2009

Peter Orszag  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN  
Administrator-Designate  
Health Resources and Services Administration  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Director Orszag and Dr. Wakefield:

The undersigned group of concerned National Health Service Corps (NHSC) stakeholder associations writes to urge increased funding for the NHSC in the FY 2010 budget request. The coalition represents the multiple health professions, institutions, and underserved areas/populations that benefit from the program's scholarship and loan repayment awards.

The NHSC is widely recognized (both in Washington and in the underserved areas it helps) as a success on many fronts. It improves access to health care for the growing numbers of underserved Americans, provides incentives for practitioners to enter primary care, reduces the financial burden that the cost of health professions education places on new practitioners, and helps ensure access to health professions education for students from all backgrounds.

However, in the past five years funding for the NHSC has been cut by over \$47 million, a 27 percent reduction from the \$171 million in FY 2003 that was already insufficient to meet the nation's needs. As a result, the NHSC has reduced the number of new annual scholarship and loan repayment awards by over 30 percent during that period (from 1,353 awards in FY 2003 to 943 in FY 2008).

By its own calculation, the NHSC falls more than 30,000 short of a field strength that would begin to meet the needs of the nation's underserved areas. While the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (P.L. 111-5) provides an important boost over the next two years, the NHSC estimates it will result in at most 4,250 additional NHSC practitioners. Furthermore, these additional practitioners will be lost in future years if the NHSC is unable to fund award continuations or maintain the same level of new annual awards.

As the nation faces serious health professions shortages, additional funding is necessary to address this deficiency by increasing new NHSC annual awards and the total NHSC field strength. This was the primary recommendation National Advisory Council on the National Health Service Corps' March 2007 report, "Priorities for Reauthorization and Legislative Updates."

For FY 2010, the NHSC stakeholders recommend a combined appropriation of \$235 million for the NHSC. This figure represents the amount authorized under the "Health Care Safety Net Act of 2008" (P.L. 110-355) for NHSC Recruitment (\$156,235,150) with a proportionate increase in the NHSC Field appropriation. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Shick at <mshick@aamc.org> or 202-862-6116.

Sincerely,

The National Health Service Corps stakeholder associations

Administrators of Internal Medicine  
Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Nurse Practitioners  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Academy of Physician Assistants  
American Association of Colleges of Nursing  
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine  
American College of Nurse-Midwives  
American College of Physicians  
American Dental Education Association  
American Dental Hygienists' Association  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Student Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Community Health Nursing Educators  
Association of Departments of Family Medicine  
Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors  
Association of Professors of Medicine  
Association of Program Directors of Internal Medicine  
Association of Specialty Professors  
Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine  
Committee of Interns and Residents/Service Employees International Union  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Rural Health Association  
North American Primary Care Research Group  
Society of Teachers of Family Medicine