

January 28, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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

On behalf of the undersigned health care provider organizations, we are writing to ask for your support for the inclusion of the bipartisan *Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act*, S. 54, within the next coronavirus response package. This important legislation, sponsored by Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), will provide additional and desperately needed funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Nurse Corps scholarship & loan repayment programs.

Specifically, *the Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act* will help to address long-standing health care shortages and bolster emergency surge capacity at a time when support and providers are desperately needed. This legislation would support the NHSC and Nurse Corps programs to meet the challenges highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing a one-time, supplemental appropriation for scholarship and loan forgiveness awards to address health provider shortages and gaps in our health care system, while investing in the pipeline of future health providers. This funding would include a focus on recruiting health practitioners from historically underrepresented populations, such as racial and ethnic minorities and individuals from low-income urban and rural communities, which helps to improve retention and health outcomes and address disparities that have been compounded by the coronavirus.

Additionally, the Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness legislation would establish a demonstration project, which would allow members of the NHSC workforce to serve in emergency capacities through the NDMS. This pilot would expand our emergency preparedness capacity by enabling individuals serving in the NHSC, or alumni who continue to practice in a health shortage area, to be available for rapid deployment for health emergencies through the NDMS.

Nationwide, we have seen shortfalls in our health workforce capacity whether in overstrained urban health centers and hospitals, or in rural areas with too few providers to adequately meet the pandemic response. While our nation was already facing a projected shortage of hundreds of thousands of doctors, nurses, and other clinicians prior to COVID-19, the pandemic has intensified the gaps in critically needed clinical workforce. The need to immediately supplement

funding to support and expand the health workforce has reached a new level of urgency. However, no additional funding for the NHSC or Nurse Corps have been included in any coronavirus relief laws— a missed opportunity to invest in our health workforce when it is needed most.

To build both the existing health workforce as well as the pipeline to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges, we strongly urge the next stimulus package include funding for the NHSC and Nurse Corps programs to support both patients and providers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic via inclusion of the *Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act*. The National Health Service Corps and Nurse Corps programs have a long history of bipartisan support and proven record of success in supporting and maintaining access to care in our nation's most underserved communities. from low-income urban neighborhoods to frontier and rural communities all of which struggle with provider shortages.

We appreciate your leadership during this public health emergency and strongly encourage the inclusion of *the Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act*, within the next coronavirus response package to support the healthcare of all communities across the nation. Should you have any questions, or for more information, please contact Amanda Pears Kelly at apearskelly@clinicians.org

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Dental Association
American Medical Association
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved
Council on Social Work Education
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Rural Health Association
Nurse-Family Partnership
Physician Assistant Education Association
Alabama Primary Health Care Association
Alaska Primary Care Association
Arizona Alliance of Community Health Centers
Asociacion De Salud Primaria De Puetro Rico
Association of Utah Community Health
Bi-State Primary Care Association
California Primary Care Association
Colorado Community Health Network
Community Care Network of Kansas
Community Health Center Association of Arkansas
Community Health Center Association of Connecticut

Community Health Center Association of Mississippi
Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States
Community Health Center Association of New York State
District of Columbia Primary Care Association
Florida Association of Community Health Centers
Georgia Primary Care Association
Hawaii Primary Care Association
Health Center Association of Nebraska
Idaho Primary Care Association
Illinois Health and Hospital Association
Illinois Primary Health Care Association
Indiana Primary Care Association
Iowa Primary Care Association
Kentucky Primary Care Association
Louisiana Primary Care Association
Maine Primary Care Association
Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
Michigan Primary Care Association
Mid-Atlantic Association of Community Health Centers
Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers
Missouri Primary Care Association
Montana Primary Care Association
Nevada Primary Care Association
New Jersey Primary Care Association
New Mexico Primary Care Association
North Carolina Community Health Center Association
North West Regional Primary Care Association
Oregon Primary Care Association
Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers
Rhode Island Health Center Association
South Carolina Primary Health Care Association
Tennessee Primary Care Association
Texas Association of Community Health Centers
Virginia Community Healthcare Association
Washington Association of Community Health
West Virginia Primary Care Association
Wisconsin Primary Health Care Association
Wyoming Primary Care Association