



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
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June 24, 2018

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Chairman
Energy and Commerce
Health Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
Energy and Commerce
Health Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Burgess and Ranking Member Green:

As the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee continues the discussion to reauthorize Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) encourages the you to consider polices that support PA education and training, while facilitating a high-quality PA workforce. Representing all 234 accredited PA education programs operating in the United States, PAEA knows first-hand the crucial role Title VII primary care training plays in the rapid development of PA education programs. In fact, Title VII provides the sole significant source of federal support for PA workforce development. PAEA greatly appreciated the introduction of H.R. 3728 – the EMPOWER Act - which recognized the value of Title VII programs by proposing their reauthorization through fiscal year 2022. As the country experiences growing provider shortages, the continued development of a well-trained PA workforce through strong investments in Title VII programs will be essential in preserving access to health care, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas. As such, PAEA recommends the Subcommittee consider prioritizing the following areas as Title VII reauthorization advances.

Training in Primary Care Medicine

The unmet need for primary care in the United States is well documented and expected to grow as the population ages and as patients require more health care services. To promote optimal health

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outcomes for all Americans, increasing the number of clinicians, including PAs, serving in primary care roles must be a top priority. **One way the Subcommittee can help strengthen the development of this vital workforce is by protecting Primary Care Training and Enhancement grants and reauthorizing Training in Primary Care Medicine program at a total level of \$125 million annually.** These grants, as well as the 15% funding floor for PA education, have led to significant innovation among PA education programs seeking to ensure that new graduates have a solid knowledge foundation in primary care practice. Moreover, as PAs often serve as the primary providers of care in rural and medically underserved areas, PAEA believes it is crucial to continue to ensure an equitable portion of this funding be allocated to PA education.

Training for Diversity

As a foundational value, PAEA believes that the development of a diverse workforce is essential to promote health equity while reducing health disparities. The Training for Diversity program has been successful in providing new opportunities for students from diverse and often disadvantaged backgrounds through scholarship and loan repayment programs such as Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS). By significantly reducing the cost of education for students benefiting from these programs, Congress has positively contributed to the development of a PA workforce capable of providing culturally competent care. **PAEA urges the Subcommittee to reauthorize the Training for Diversity program at a total level of \$116 million annually.**

Area Health Education Centers

Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) have served as a key component to promote PA graduates to practice in primary care settings and for PA education to benefit from best practices in addressing the unique health needs of underserved populations. Moreover, AHECs significantly contribute to the capacity of PA education programs to direct students to primary care roles in rural and medically underserved areas following graduation. **PAEA supports the reauthorization of Area Health Education Centers at a total level of \$125 million annually.**

Physician Assistant Education Research

In response to the evolution of health systems and increased workforce demands, PA education has experienced significant growth in new PA programs, student enrollment, and PA graduates. Optimal care for patients requires a comprehensive understanding of the most effective ways to deliver didactic and clinical education to students. Building upon these foundations requires additional investments in PA research, particularly in the fields of assessment and evaluation, that can enhance PA education, improve the PA profession, and provide better results for patients. **PAEA supports the authorization of PA education research grants at a total level of \$1 million annually.**



PAEA urges the Subcommittee to consider these programs and the vital role they play in PA education and the PA workforce. As valued members of the health care team, we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Subcommittee and answer any questions as Title VII reauthorization moves forward. Please contact Chief Policy and Research Officer Dave Keahey at dkeahey@PAEAonline.org or (703) 667-4339 so that PAEA can continue to be a resource to you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Mustone Alexander".

Lisa Mustone Alexander, EdD, MPH, PA-C
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timi Agar Barwick".

Timi Agar Barwick, MPM
Chief Executive Officer