



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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March 21, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education Labor
and Pensions
United States Senate
648 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

As the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) continues the discussion to reauthorize Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA) encourages the Committee to consider polices that support PA education and training, while facilitating a high-quality PA workforce. Representing all 229 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. As the country experiences growing physician shortages, the continued development of a well-trained PA workforce will be essential in preserving access to health care, particularly in rural and medically underserved areas. As such, PAEA recommends the Committee consider prioritizing the following areas as Title VII reauthorization advances.

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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 outcomes for all Americans, increasing the number of clinicians, including PAs, serving in primary care roles must be a top priority. **One way the Committee can help strengthen the development of this vital workforce is by preserving grants administered under the Primary Care Training and Enhancement (PCTE) program and reauthorizing Training in Primary Care Medicine program at a total level of \$125 million annually.** These programs 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 ensure an equitable portion of this funding be allocated to PA education. **Further, we urge the Committee to include language in the bill to ensure that at least 15% of funds allocated under the Primary Care Training and Enhancement program are dedicated to the development of a high-quality PA workforce in primary care.**

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 Congress 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. To ensure optimal care for patients requires a comprehensive understanding of the most effective ways of delivering didactic and clinical education to students. Building upon these foundations requires additional PA education research that can help enhance PA education, further educate 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 HELP Committee 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 Committee 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 cursive script that reads "Lisa Mustone Alexander".

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Timi Agar Barwick".

Timi Agar Barwick, MPM
Chief Executive Officer