

June 24, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the nation's safety net providers, educators, clinicians, rural health advocates, and other key stakeholders, we are writing to express our strong support for the Physician Assistant Education Public Health Initiatives Act. At a time of critical challenges for both patients and health care providers, this legislation would meaningfully strengthen access to care through targeted investments in workforce development, and we urge you to support its advancement.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the health care workforce has been placed under unprecedented pressure, facing high patient volumes, long hours, and increasing rates of burnout. Beyond the immediate issue of short-term workforce attrition, a troubling implication of these demands has been limited time for clinicians to train health professions students, which is critical to ensure a high-quality future workforce. In the absence of sufficient clinical training opportunities, particularly in underserved settings, we are concerned that demand for providers will continue to outpace supply and result in longer wait times and worsened outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable patients. The Physician Assistant Education Public Health Initiatives Act responds to this challenge by authorizing \$5 million annually to support clinical rotations for PA students at federally qualified health centers, critical access hospitals, and rural health clinics. This investment, which mirrors existing, successful programs like the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program for physicians, is an evidence-based strategy to both expand clinical education capacity and expose students to high-need clinical settings during their training, ultimately resulting in a durable workforce pipeline.

As the health system implements lessons learned from the pandemic, an additional priority must be ensuring that the provider workforce is well-equipped to respond to increased demand for telehealth services. High-quality telehealth care requires clinicians to be trained in effective patient communication strategies and privacy and security responsibilities relative to in-person care. PA programs need additional capacity to include significant telehealth content in their didactic curriculum. To improve provider preparedness to meet the promise of telehealth, the Physician Assistant Education Public Health Initiatives Act would further authorize \$3 million annually to support the development and implementation of a standardized telehealth curriculum for all PA programs. This investment would ensure that all PA students graduate with the education necessary to deliver high-value and high-quality telehealth services, ultimately resulting in better patient outcomes.

As Congress continues efforts to strengthen the health workforce, we appreciate your consideration of the Physician Assistant Education Public Health Initiatives Act. If you have

questions or would like additional information on the legislation, please contact Tyler Smith, Senior Director of Government Relations for the Physician Assistant Education Association, at tsmith@PAEAonline.org.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Nephrology PAs
American Academy of PAs
American Association of Surgical Physician Assistants
American Society of Endocrine Physician Assistants
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved
Association of Neurosurgical Physician Assistants
Children's Health Fund
Indiana Rural Health Association
Kentucky Primary Care Association
Kentucky Rural Health Association
Maine Primary Care Association
National Association of Rural Health Clinics
National Center for Frontier Communities
New England Rural Health Association
Physician Assistant Education Association
South Carolina Primary Health Care Association