



**Statement of Support for the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA)
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and Hospice Action Network
Before the House Energy and Commerce Committee
September 8, 2016**

On behalf of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), our 1,300 member organizations serving individuals in more than 3,800 locations nationwide, and the 1.6 million Americans served in hospice each year, we commend the Energy and Commerce Committee for its consideration of the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA). This important legislation will go a long way toward training the next generation of physicians and nurses who will care for many of us as we cope with serious illness and approach the end of our lives.

Hospice and palliative care are patient-centered models of care that take into account not only the patient's underlying disease state, but his or her emotional and spiritual needs, personal values and beliefs, care needs across settings, pain and symptoms, and family and caregiver needs. Hospice and palliative care professionals require a multi-dimensional set of skills, attitudes and competencies, including the ability to manage the myriad symptoms associated with advanced and comorbid illnesses; the ability to facilitate communication and problem solving between patients, their families and their care teams; and the ability to coordinate and provide team-based care across a range of settings.

A 2010 study published in the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* found a significant shortage in the number of adequately trained hospice and palliative care physicians and recommended an additional 6,000–18,000 physicians to meet existing hospice and palliative care needs. In the six years that have followed, that need has likely increased significantly. Further, palliative and end-of-life care must be better integrated into other specialties. A survey by the American Society of Clinical Oncology found that 65% of respondents felt that they had received inadequate education in controlling symptoms associated with cancer, and 81% felt they had inadequate mentoring in discussing a poor prognosis with their patients and families.

The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act will go a long way to correct these problems by supporting programs to provide clinical palliative medicine training in a variety of settings, including hospice, and developing specific measures to evaluate the competency of trainees. The Palliative Medicine and Hospice Academic Career Award program will enable hospice and palliative physicians to train members of interdisciplinary teams (IDTs) of healthcare professionals in palliative and hospice care techniques. This legislation will further expand the variety of professionals trained to provide hospice care, including nurses and clinical social workers. This program is especially important to the hospice community because of the reliance on the IDT to effectively care for patients.

As our health care delivery system prepares for the aging and decline of the 65 million baby boomers, it is imperative that we train physicians, nurses and other health care providers to better manage and deliver their care. We strongly support the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act, and encourage you to enact this important and much-needed legislation.