

House Labor HHS Subcommittee Testimony  
Dr. James Fortenberry, Pediatrician in Chief  
*Short Oral Testimony/Talking Points*

Chairman Kingston, Ranking Member DeLauro and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education program, or "CHGME".

I am Dr. James Fortenberry, Pediatrician in Chief for Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. On behalf of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Children's Hospital Association, I would like to thank the Chairman and the Committee for the ongoing support you have given to the CHGME program.

CHGME supports children's health by providing independent children's hospitals with support for graduate medical education comparable to funding that adult teaching hospitals receive through Medicare. Since the program's beginning, CHGME has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support in Congress, under both Republican and Democratic leadership. Children's hospitals are extremely grateful to Congress and the members of the Subcommittee for their outstanding history of supporting CHGME.

CHGME funding has had a tremendous impact, enabling children's hospitals to increase their overall training by more than 45 percent since the program began in 1999. In addition, the CHGME program has accounted for more than 74 percent of the growth in the number of new pediatric subspecialists being trained nationwide.<sup>1</sup> Today, the 55 hospitals that receive CHGME, less than one percent of all hospitals, train over 6,000 residents annually. This equates to the training of 49 percent of all pediatric residents in the country, including 45 percent of general pediatricians and 51 percent of pediatric specialists.

In 2012, the Children's Hospital Association conducted a survey that found Children's hospitals across the country continue to experience significant shortages in some pediatric specialties.

The pediatric specialty shortages affect children and their family's ability to receive timely, appropriate care, including surgery. Children's hospitals clinic wait times are on average two weeks; but for certain pediatric specialties experiencing

---

<sup>1</sup> Received by Kris Rogers, Director of Clinical Research at CHOA, stating this is a statistic from the American Medical Association.

physician shortages, the wait time far exceeds this standard up to 14.5 weeks and beyond.

The White House's FY 2015 budget proposes eliminating funding for CHGME and incorporating support for training at children's hospitals into a new competitive grant program under HRSA, funded from Medicare trust fund dollars. A minimum of \$100 million would be set aside specifically for children's hospitals in FY 2015 and FY 2016.

While the White House specifically includes funding for training in children's hospitals in the budget, the administration's proposal continues to underfund pediatric training. Furthermore, children's hospitals have strong concerns that replacing the current system with competitive grants that are limited in duration and available only to a limited class of recipients puts at risk the gains that have been made for children's health under CHGME.

Children's hospitals welcome the idea of engaging with the administration and congress on ways to strengthen the pediatric workforce for the future. In the present, however, financial support for GME in children's hospitals needs to be uninterrupted and undiminished. Proposing to eliminate support for a current program with a proven track record of success

Children's hospitals are grateful to House and Senate lawmakers for reaffirming bipartisan support for CHGME and for providing \$265 million for CHGME for FY 2014, essentially level funding over 2013.

For FY 2015, [on behalf of [CHA and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta] I respectfully request that Congress provide \$300 million for CHGME. We believe that funding in this amount is justified based on continuing pediatric workforce needs, particularly in the area of pediatric sub-specialties, where many shortages still exist. We recognize that the fiscal climate is extraordinarily challenging and that Congress has a responsibility to carefully consider the nation's spending priorities. However, the CHGME program is critical to protecting gains in pediatric health and ensuring access to care for children nationwide.

On behalf of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and the Children's Hospital Association, and the children and families we serve, thank you for your past support for this critical program and your leadership in protecting children's health. I strongly urge continued support for the CHGME program in FY 2015 so that we may continue to train the next generation of general and specialized pediatricians.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today and I welcome any questions.