

September 13, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone:

I am writing on behalf of the American Association of Teaching Health Centers to thank you and the Committee for including \$6 billion for the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program in your Committee's portions of the Build Back Better Act.

Since the inception of THCGME program, more than 1,100 graduates have completed a Teaching Health Center (THC) residency and a substantial percentage have remained in primary care and become doctors in underserved communities. There are numerous stories of a THC-trained doctor becoming the first physician in a community in decades, bringing access to those who have had none.

One of the positive stories to emerge from the current COVID-19 pandemic has been the role in combating the coronavirus played by medical residents at the nation's 59 THCs. From screening and testing patients at community healthcare clinics to adapting telehealth for countless patients with ongoing medical conditions, these physicians-in-training have contributed greatly to ensuring primary care access for thousands of Americans in underserved urban and rural communities.

The funding provided in the draft bill will help ensure sustainable funding that will help increase access for rural and urban medically underserved communities by training and producing primary care physicians to serve these populations for the future. We know that historically you have been a great champion of the THCGME program and are grateful that you and others on the Committee have considered our funding requests so favorably.

The funding will permit continued growth of existing Teaching Health Centers, the addition of new Teaching Health Centers, increases in the per resident allocation and ultimately should facilitate a robust increase in the number of residents in training from the current level of 769. Your legislation should also help ensure that each state could have at least one THC, which is an improvement over the current presence of THCs in only half our states. The addition of many new physicians in rural and urban medically underserved areas will make an important long-term impact on the physician shortage – a shortage that adversely impacts the health of so many Americans.

We look forward to continuing to work with you as the legislative process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Cristine Serrano
Executive Director
American Association of Teaching Health Centers

Community Health of Central Washington
Institute for Family Health
Long Island FQHC
UAMS/AHEC West
Clinica Sierra Vista
Ozark Center
Shasta Community Health Center
Community Health Care/Hilltop
Cornerstone Care, Inc.
Spokane Teaching Health Center
Greater Lawrence Family Health Center
San Ysidro Health
SAC Health System

Erie Family Health Center
Lonestar Community Health Center
Montana Family Medicine Residency
The Wright Center
Community Health Institute of South Florida
Primary Health Care, Inc.
Cahaba Medical Care Foundation
Connecticut Institute for Communities, Inc.
Detroit Wayne County Health Authority
Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic
Life Long Medical Care
North Country HealthCare