



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS
INTERNAL MEDICINE | *Doctors for Adults*

July 11, 2007

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kennedy and Cochran:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), representing 123,000 internal medicine physicians and medical students, I want to thank you for introducing S. 1576, the “Minority Health Improvement and Disparity Elimination Act.” As the largest medical specialty society in the United States, ACP is committed to the elimination of disparities in healthcare access and quality. The College greatly appreciates your efforts to improve the health and health care of racial and ethnic minorities.

The College is pleased that enhancing cultural competency training for health care providers is at the heart of this legislation. The College recognizes clear communication between patients and providers as an essential component of the provider-patient relationship, affecting the quality of clinical encounters. The creation of a cultural competency Internet clearinghouse will enhance cultural competency training for all health care providers.

The College also supports your efforts to provide grants for the improvement of health care access and outreach to underserved populations and to increase research that will result in the reduction of health care disparities. The College regards research to be a vital part of identifying, monitoring, and addressing disparities in health care among racial and ethnic minorities. The College endorses the improved collection of data on race, ethnicity and primary language through reliable use of standardized measurement tools.

ACP applauds your effort to reauthorize the Health Research Services Administration health professions training program under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. The College considers a diverse workforce of health professionals an integral part of eliminating health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities, and supports continued and increased funding for programs and initiatives that aim to increase the number of health care providers serving minority communities.

In any legislation expanding health care access, it is imperative that quality indicators and performance measure are established to promote objective assessment of the effectiveness of the care. The College believes that quality and efficiency measures should be developed through a transparent, multi-stakeholder process that considers scientific evidence, administrative

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feasibility of data collection, and resources from the National Quality Forum and the AQA (formerly Ambulatory Care Quality Alliance). The proposed provision directing the HHS Secretary to analyze data, adopt quality measures, and disseminate information to appropriate agencies, entities, and the public is unclear in its description of the patient populations for which quality measurements would be designed and in its implications for health care providers.

We therefore strongly encourage you to clarify the process by which physicians and health care providers would be evaluated using quality indicators, the patient population that would be covered by the quality measurement program and the extent to which assessment results would be provided to the public. We also promote strong representation of physicians and other clinicians on the multi-stakeholder council advising the HHS Secretary on quality measure identification and adoption.

The College believes that the “Minority Health Improvement and Disparity Elimination Act” offers an opportunity to address healthcare disparities and inequities in a comprehensive, resolute manner. We look forward to working with you on the promotion of this legislation and passage into law.

Sincerely,



David C. Dale, M.D., FACP
President