



May 20, 2020

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Maloney,

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express our strong support for the Student Loan Forgiveness for Frontline Health Workers Act, H.R. 6720 which would eliminate graduate school debt for health care workers, including physicians and medical students, who are providing direct patient care in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 159,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

Many residents and medical students are playing a critical role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis and providing care to patients on the frontlines. For residents, COVID-19 is inflicting additional strain as they are redeployed from their primary training programs and put their health on the line caring for the sickest patients, many without appropriate personal protective equipment. Some medical schools, such as New York University, are graduating their students early to deploy them to care for patients during this public health crisis.

The College has long been concerned by the already high and ever-increasing cost of obtaining a medical education and the impact those expenses have on the number of medical students and residents opting to enter careers in primary care. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the median medical education debt for indebted medical school graduates in 2019 was \$200,000 and about 70 percent of medical student graduates reported having education debt. The College wishes to specifically underscore the importance of easing the financial strain of debt for medical students, residents, and physicians who are playing such a critical role in responding to the COVID-19 crisis and providing care to patients under circumstances that are extremely challenging. We applaud your effort to provide meaningful relief in the form of student loan forgiveness for these individuals.

Thank you for your leadership on this key issue, Representative Maloney. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to move the bill's vital provisions forward, i.e., to forgive student loans for medical students, residents, physicians and other clinicians who are on the frontlines of providing care to COVID-19 patients or helping the health care system cope with the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline W. Fincher MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP
President