



November 19, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express our strong support and the importance of a multiyear reauthorization and funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program. These are vital federal health programs designed to expand access to primary care services and the primary care physician workforce. Unfortunately, both programs face expiring authorizations of mandatory funding at the end of 2024. We appreciate that both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have put forth legislation to extend the NHSC and THCGME. Accordingly, we urge you to include the necessary mandatory funding reauthorizations for these programs in any end-of-year legislative package or omnibus spending bill. In the interest of the millions of patients who rely on these programs for their most basic primary care, we urge swift action to pass bipartisan legislation to extend these programs.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 161,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge, clinical expertise, and compassion to the preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Additionally, internal medicine is the specialty with the largest number of active physicians specializing in primary care, with 120,342 internal medicine physicians being identified as specializing in primary care in 2021.

It is estimated that there will be [a shortage of 17,800 to 48,000 primary care physicians by 2034](#). [A 2021 report by the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine](#) called on policymakers to dramatically increase investment in primary care. The evidence clearly shows that high-quality primary care is critical for achieving health care's quadruple aim (enhancing patient experience, improving population health, reducing costs, and improving the health care team experience). Medical students

and residents are playing a critical role in furnishing care to patients while many of them carry [an average debt of over \\$200,000](#). These physicians-in-training serve an integral role in the delivery of health care in the United States. With the growing demands being placed on the existing workforce it is even more imperative to protect patients' access to care by assisting these clinicians serving on the frontlines and to increase the number of future physicians in the pipeline. Both the NHSC and the THCGME program are enormously important to expand the number of primary care physicians through training and service.

- **Fund the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) at a minimum of \$350 million for fiscal year 2025:** The NHSC awards service-oriented scholarships and loan repayment assistance to health care professionals who work in underserved communities across the country. The program helps to expand the country's overall primary care workforce and meet the health care needs of rural and underserved communities. With a field strength of over 18,000 primary care clinicians, NHSC members are providing culturally competent and effective care to over 23 million patients at over 21,000 NHSC-approved health care sites in urban, rural, and frontier areas, including community health centers. These funds would expand NHSC's field strength, helping to address the health professionals' workforce shortage and growing maldistribution. For FY2025, the NHSC's funding situation is particularly urgent and faces a funding cliff because its mandatory funding is set to expire at the end of the 2024 calendar year. Accordingly, ACP urges at least \$350 million for the NHSC in FY2025 mandatory funding as contained in the House-passed Lower Costs, More Transparency Act, H.R. 5378.
- **Fund the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) at a minimum of \$175 million for fiscal year 2025:** The THCGME program places residents training in primary care disciplines in community venues in ambulatory care such as community health centers (CHCs). THCGME funding supports these sites that furnish crucial primary care training, bolstering the physician pipeline. Training primary care physician residents in field and office settings help them gain valuable experience and encourages these physicians to continue to work in safety net settings. THCGME funded 72 teaching health centers with 969 residents trained, of which 238 were internal medicine residents, a specialty that comprises the largest number of primary care physicians. Over 900,000 patients received care from THCGME-supported resident training programs during the 2022-2023 academic year. For FY2025, THCGME's funding situation is particularly urgent and faces a funding cliff because its mandatory funding is set to expire at the end of 2024 calendar year. Accordingly, ACP urges at least \$175 million for the THCGME program in FY2025 mandatory funding as contained in the House-passed Lower Costs, More Transparency Act, H.R. 5378.

In closing, we urge Congress to reauthorize and fund these important programs to further expand access to primary care services for all Americans. The College is keenly aware of the fiscal pressures facing the Congress at this time, but also recognizes that the United States must invest robustly in workforce and delivery system initiatives that support primary care and the public health and have a proven track record of effectiveness. Please contact Jared Frost, Manager, Legislative Affairs at jfrost@acponline.org or 202-261-4526 if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Issac Opole". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some overlapping letters.

Issac Opole, MBChB, PhD, MACP
President