



March 25, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner and leaders McConnell, Pelosi and Reid:

On behalf of the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved and the clinicians we represent across the country, I write to offer our strong support for H.R. 2 – The Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015. In addition to permanently fixing the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate formula, the legislation will provide funding for a number of programs that are essential to delivering access to primary care for millions of individuals and families that are currently underserved.

As an organization that was founded by alumni of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) more than 18 years ago, we are particularly pleased to see the funding extension for this critical program included in H.R. 2. As you are well aware, the current funding for the NHSC program ends on October 1st of this year. The NHSC helps place more than 9,000 clinicians in areas designated as having a shortage of access to primary care services. These clinicians deliver care to nearly 10 million people – all of which is endangered by the funding cliff faced by the program.

ACU strongly supports the inclusion of the NHSC funding in H.R. 2 and we look forward to working with Congress to ensure that the program can continue to support those most in need. The NHSC is a highly effective program that enables local safety net organizations to leverage its loan and scholarship awards to recruit and retain primary care providers. This is especially important in rural communities that continue to face tremendous challenges in recruiting providers and receive more than 43 percent of all NHSC placements.

The NHSC is available to a wide variety of safety net entities, including Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), American Indian and Native Alaska Health Clinics, Certified Rural Health Clinics, Critical Access Hospitals, School-based Clinics, Mobile Units, Free Clinics, Community Mental Health Centers, State or Local Health Departments, Correctional and Detention Facilities, Community Outpatient Facilities, and also certain private practices. However, nearly half of all placements occur in FQHCs, further leveraging that important program.

ACU also strongly supports the inclusion of funding extension for both the FQHC program and the Teaching Health Centers (THC) program. With the NHSC, these programs ensure millions of underserved individuals have access to key primary care services in their local communities. Similar to the NHSC



program, both the FQHC and THC programs were facing catastrophic funding cliffs and we are deeply appreciative that each program was included in H.R. 2.

We are also aware that there is continuing debate on the extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program extension. ACU supports the longest possible extension of this important insurance program and urge Congress to consider all options to ensure children, their families, health care providers, and states have the certainty they need through the extension of the program.

Thank you again for your leadership on this critical piece of health care legislation and we are hopeful that it will pass with strong bipartisan support as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Kennedy, MPH
Executive Director

Cc: Rep. Fred Upton, Chair Committee on Energy and Commerce
Rep. Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Rep. Paul Ryan, Chair, Committee on Ways and Means
Rep. Sander Levin, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means
Sen. Orrin Hatch, Chair, Committee on Finance
Sen. Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Committee on Finance