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HPNEC Luncheon Briefing

Introduction

- Last year, Congress eliminated the Geriatrics Health Professions Program. I would like to explain
 - What the program is
 - Why it is important
 - How Congress should reinstate it

Explanation of the Program

- The geriatrics health professions program is funded under title VII under the Health Resources and Services Administration.
- It funds three programs: geriatric education centers, fellowship programs and geriatric academic career awards.
- Geriatric education centers train health professions faculty, students, and practitioners in diagnosis, treatment, disease prevention, disability, and other health problems of the aged.
- Geriatric fellowship programs fund training for health professionals who plan to teach geriatric medicine, geriatric dentistry, or geriatric behavioral or mental health. Trainees participate in a variety of service rotations such as geriatric consulting services, acute care services, dental services, geriatric behavioral and mental health units, day and home care programs, rehabilitation services, extended care facilities, and geriatric ambulatory care.
- Geriatric academic career awards support the academic career development of geriatricians in junior faculty positions who are committed to teaching geriatrics in medical schools across the country.
- Prior to the program's elimination, there were geriatric education centers in 35 states, 10 fellowship programs and over 100 academic career awards. It remains unclear whether any of these programs will continue in a short term, limited fashion with new funding from other sources.
- Each of these programs targets a distinct but important component of trainees and disciplines (junior faculty, continuing education and those in medical school).

Why The Program Is Important

- The delegates at the 2005 White House Conference on Aging) placed two geriatric workforce training issues among the top ten issues that America needs to address in order to ensure high quality care for older adults.
- With millions of baby boomers reaching retirement age, there is a growing shortage of geriatric health care providers to care for them, and cuts in Title VII will only exacerbate the shortage.
- The U.S. has half as many geriatricians as it needs right now. While the number of physicians has increased over the last eight years, the number of doctors certified in geriatrics has dropped 20%, from 9,000 to 6,700. By 2030, the U.S. will need up to 36,000 geriatricians and will fall far short of this figure unless steps are taken to train new providers.
- In 2005, the Geriatric Education Center network reported delivery of low-cost professional geriatric training interventions to over 50,000 health care providers who collectively reported over 8.6 million patient encounters and enhanced quality of care provided to older adults.
- Loss of funding will directly impact our nation's ability to provide high quality care to our most vulnerable constituents - the frail elderly - because we will not have trained the next generation of providers about the unique health care needs of older adults.

Restore Funding to Geriatrics Health Professions in 2007

- Last year, Congress eliminated the program in an effort to reach draconian discretionary budget caps.
- This year, Congress should reinstate the program to FY 2005 funding levels by including \$31.5 million in funding for geriatrics health professions programs in the 2007 appropriations bill.
- If Title VII funding is not restored, there is a real danger that the academic geriatricians who focus on educating the next generation of health care educators and providers will not remain in the field.