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**Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

August 7, 2008

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

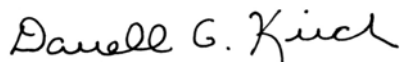
On behalf of the Association of American medical Colleges (AAMC), I write in regard to the reauthorization of the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) in the upcoming conference of the "Health Care Safety Net Act of 2008" (H.R. 1343, S. 901). By your co-sponsorship of the "National Health Service Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs Reauthorization Act of 2007" (H.R. 2915) you have endorsed a \$300 million NHSC authorization level. The AAMC applauds your proposed expansion of the NHSC and urges you to match this commitment by supporting an authorization level of \$300 million for the NHSC in the conference of the Health Care Safety Net Act of 2008. The AAMC is a not-for-profit association representing all 129 accredited U.S. medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems; and 94 academic and scientific societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 109,000 faculty members, 67,000 medical students, and 104,000 resident physicians.

The nation faces serious health professions shortages as approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population reside in federally designated health professions shortage areas (HPSAs). With the average medical education debt growing to over \$140,000, students are likely to increase their interest and willingness to participate in the NHSC to alleviate this financial burden through scholarship and loan repayment opportunities. While the NHSC supports a field strength of over 4,000 practioners, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) estimates that an additional 30,000 practioners are needed to achieve the target HPSA practioner/population ratios.

In the past 5 years, funding for the NHSC has been cut by \$47 million, a 27 percent reduction from the \$171 million FY 2003 budget that was already insufficient to meet the nation's needs. As a result, the NHSC has reduced the number of annual scholarship and loan repayment awards by over 25 percent during that period (from 1,351 awards in FY 2003 to 1,012 in FY 2007). At its current funding level, the NHSC is unable to award all qualified scholar applicants, and 13 students are turned away for every 1 accepted. Similarly, there are twice as many practioners in undeserved areas seeking loan repayment than accepted applicants. To address these deficiencies, the AAMC strongly supports the steady and sustainable increase your proposed \$300 million authorization level could provide.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important matter. Please contact your colleagues on the House Energy and Commerce Committee in support of your proposed \$300 million NHSC authorization level. I look forward to working with you to reauthorize the NHSC at a funding level that helps address our nation's growing underserved populations and the predicted physician workforce shortage.

Sincerely,

  
Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.