



**Association of  
American Medical Colleges**  
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**Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.**  
President and Chief Executive Officer

February 3, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write in support of increased subsidized Stafford loan limits for graduate and professional students in the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan." The AAMC is a not-for-profit association representing all 130 accredited U.S. medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems; and nearly 90 academic and scientific societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 125,000 faculty members, 70,000 medical students, and 104,000 resident physicians.

Over 85 percent of medical students graduate in debt. The average indebtedness of that group is \$155,000 and over a quarter of medical students graduate with debt levels of \$200,000 or more. The nation faces a physician workforce shortage and the cost of medical education can be a daunting figure for prospective students and future physicians. Concern about managing this substantial debt burden can play a factor in career decisions or drive physicians away from primary care specialties. Limiting exposure to private loans and increasing the portion of subsidized loans will help ensure medical education is affordable for students from all backgrounds.

Whereas undergraduate subsidized Stafford loan limits increased by \$1,875 in 2007, the graduate and professional limit has not increased in over a decade. The AAMC recommends increasing the current annual subsidized Stafford loan limit for graduate and professional students from \$8,500 to at least \$12,000. Accordingly, the AAMC also recommends increasing the aggregate subsidized Stafford loan limit for graduate and professional students from \$65,500 to at least \$79,500. Rather than taking on additional debt, this will allow medical students to avoid less favorable private loans and higher interest GradPLUS loans.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Shick on my staff at <[mshick@aamc.org](mailto:mshick@aamc.org)> or 202-862-6116.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darrell G. Kirch".

Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.