



ASSOCIATION OF  
AMERICAN  
MEDICAL COLLEGES

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July 15, 2003

The Honorable  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) is concerned with the inadequate funding proposed for two programs critical to the nation's health in the FY 2004 Labor-Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriation bill; the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the health professions education programs under the Health Resources and Services Administration.

We urge you to support efforts to increase funding for both programs when the bill is considered on the Senate floor.

The AAMC represents the 126 accredited U.S. medical schools; some 400 major teaching hospitals, including Veterans Administration medical centers; more than 105,000 faculty in 96 academic and scientific societies; and the nation's 66,000 medical students and 97,000 residents.

The Senate bill proposes \$27.982 billion for NIH, an increase of 3.7 percent over the current year's level. Slowing the growth of the nation's medical research efforts in the abrupt manner proposed by this bill will undermine the gains achieved through the doubling of the NIH budget. Progress in a wide variety of research areas will be impaired, particularly in the clinical research that is essential if we are to translate research into better healthcare and treatment. The Senate recognized the importance of a sustained investment in medical research when it voted 96 to 1 on March 25 to add an additional \$1.8 billion in the FY 2004 budget resolution to the Administration's budget request for the NIH.

We urge you to work to bring the funding for NIH to \$30 billion – a 10% increase over the FY 2003 budget – which is the amount recommended by the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding necessary to sustain the momentum of discovery.

The AAMC also urges you to stop the elimination of the Title VII health professions programs. The bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 26 provides just \$21 million for all of the Title VII health professions programs, a 93 percent decrease. This cut would eliminate almost all of the health professions funding, devastating programs that educate and train health professionals and bring quality care to many communities across our nation.

The geographic, economic, and cultural barriers within the country's health care delivery system need to be addressed to achieve access to health care for all Americans. To begin to eliminate these problems, health care professionals must be recruited, trained, and retained to serve in medically underserved areas. In 1998, 42 to 56 percent of graduates from the Title VII-supported primary care programs entered practice in underserved areas, compared to a mean of 10 percent of health professions graduates overall. Data from 1998 also indicate that 35 to 50 percent of graduates of these programs represented minority or disadvantaged groups, compared to 10 percent minority representation overall.

A top priority for the AAMC is to assure access to quality health care for all Americans. The health professions education programs are critical elements in providing this access. Any decreases in funding for these programs would hamper their ability to continue to prepare health professionals to care for the neediest populations. The AAMC urges you to oppose these cuts and support the restoration of funding for the Title VII health professions programs to at least the FY 2003 level of \$308.4 million.

We thank you for your continued support of these programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan J. Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D.