March 29, 2012

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 131  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, and Education, and Related Agencies  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 156  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Shelby:

Under bi-partisan leadership, Congress has worked to provide freestanding children’s hospitals with funding to support the training of medical residents through the Children’s Hospitals Graduate Medical Education Program (CHGME). While we recognize the critical need for Congress to reduce federal spending, we feel there should be a shared sacrifice among worthy programs so that no single program is cut disproportionately. We believe that the Children’s Hospital Graduate Medical Education program has served the nation well and is very worthy of federal funding, and we urge you to provide this program with the FY13 funding support necessary to maintain the gains made over the last decade.

The CHGME program represents the most important federal investment in strengthening the pediatric workforce and has been a major success. Since created by Congress in 1999 to address the gap in federal support for pediatric training, CHGME has increased the number of pediatric providers, addressed critical shortages in pediatric specialty care, and improved children’s access to care. Today, the children’s hospitals that receive CHGME, less than one percent of all hospitals, train 49 percent of all pediatric residents. The program ensures that general pediatricians and pediatric specialists are trained to care for children in communities across the country, covering everything from well-child visits to the most complex cardiac surgeries. CHGME trains doctors who go on to care for children living in metropolitan cities, rural communities, suburbs and everywhere in between.

In FY 2012 Congress continued its long history of bipartisan support for CHGME by appropriating funding for CHGME, as it has every year since the program began. Unfortunately, as you know, the President’s FY 2013 budget proposes $88 million for the CHGME program, only one-third of the current annual funding level. These cuts put at risk the gains that have been achieved under CHGME and threaten the pediatric workforce pipeline. Even at CHGME’s current annual funding level, children’s hospitals struggle to train enough pediatricians and pediatric specialists to keep up with the growing demand. While much has been achieved, much remains to be done, as serious shortages in many pediatric specialties persist, often resulting in long wait times for care. Now is not the time to take a step backwards in pediatric medicine.
We recognize that the current budget climate is extraordinarily challenging and that Congress has a responsibility to carefully consider the nation's spending priorities. CHGME is a critical investment in our country's medical future to ensure that children will have continuing access to the care they need across provider settings. We thank you for the Subcommittee's past leadership in investing in the healthcare of all children and urge continued support for the CHGME program in FY 2013.

Respectfully,

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Barbara Mikulski
United States Senator

John F. Kerry
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Mark Begich
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Daniel K. Akaka
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator