



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**

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

October 30, 2015

The Honorable Beto O'Rourke
United States House of Representatives
1330 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman O'Rourke:

Thank you for your leadership in helping ensure our nation's veterans have access to the world's best health care. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) is pleased to endorse the "Enhanced Veterans Healthcare Act of 2015" to further strengthen the relationship between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), medical schools, and teaching hospitals.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association representing all 145 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 VA medical centers; and over 90 academic and scientific societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 148,000 faculty members, 83,000 medical students, and 115,000 resident physicians

The VA and academic medicine have enjoyed a 70-year history of affiliations to help care for those who have served this nation. However, this shared mission can be strengthened through joint ventures in research, education, and patient care. Already our institutions and medical faculty collaborate in these areas, but often VA lacks the administrative mechanisms to cooperatively increase medical personnel, services, equipment, infrastructure, and research capacity to meet growing demand for veteran health care.

The Enhanced Veterans Healthcare Act of 2015 will help ensure veterans have access to clinical services at teaching hospitals that are scarcely available elsewhere. AAMC teaching hospitals provide around-the-clock, onsite, and fully-staffed standby services for critically ill or injured patients, including 71 percent of all Level 1 trauma centers; 73 percent of all burn care units; 74 percent of Joint Commission Advanced Certification Comprehensive Stroke Centers; and between 67 and 87 percent of heart, lung, liver, and bone marrow surgical transplant services.

Your legislation also will better integrate the academic medicine environment within VA. The combination of education, research, and patient care at academic medical centers cultivates a culture of curiosity and innovation, which leads to the best health care in the

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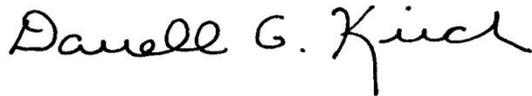
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world. Medical faculty must be skilled in the latest clinical innovations to train medical residents. State-of-the-art technology and groundbreaking treatments jump quickly from the research bench to the bedside, enhancing the quality of care provided to patients, including access to a majority of National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded clinical trials.

The joint ventures proposed under your legislation also will improve care for the more than two thirds of veterans not enrolled in VA health care. AAMC is committed to ensuring that medical students and residents acquire a clinical cultural competency for veterans, military service members, and their families through VA training as well as through programs like Joining Forces Wellness Week. Greater collaboration with the VA will increase the military exposure of the next generation of physicians who will care for our nation's veterans, inside and outside the VA.

The VA is at a crossroads. Combined with greater investments in research, education, and infrastructure, joint ventures with academic medicine can help VA become an employer of choice. The AAMC and its members will always be honored to care for our nation's veterans, and I looked forward to working with you on this important endeavor.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrell G. Kirch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darrell G. Kirch, M.D.