



**Association of  
American Medical Colleges**  
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February 6, 2018

The Honorable Johnny Isakson  
Chair, Committee on Veterans Affairs  
United States Senate

The Honorable Phil Roe, MD  
Chair, Committee on Veterans Affairs  
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans Affairs  
United States Senate

The Honorable Tim Walz  
Ranking Member, Committee on Veterans Affairs  
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairmen Isakson and Roe, and Ranking Members Tester and Walz,

Thank you for working to preserve the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) partnerships with U.S. medical schools and teaching hospitals in the Caring for Our Veterans Act of 2017 (S. 2193) and the VA Care in the Community Act (H.R. 4242). We appreciate that both bills approved by your Committees retain VA's authority under 38 U.S. Code § 8153 to directly contract with academic affiliates for clinical services scarcely available in other community settings.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) is a not-for-profit association representing all 149 accredited U.S. medical schools; over 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 VA medical centers; and more than 80 academic and scientific societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 167,000 faculty members, 88,000 medical students, and 124,000 resident physicians. The VA also has over 500 academic affiliations, including with at least 135 U.S. medical schools. Each year, the VA helps train more than 20,000 medical students and more than 40,000 medical residents.

Veterans Service Organizations, the VA Commission on Care, the VA Plan to Consolidate Community Care Programs, and VA Secretary David Shulkin, MD, among others, have all reiterated the importance of VA's academic affiliates to caring for our nation's Veterans. Indeed, the long-standing relationship between VA and academic medicine through our shared and integrated missions of patient care, education, and research improve the health of Veterans' and all Americans.

As Congress considers VA health reform legislation and funding for the agency, it is critical to strike an appropriate balance that ensures a robust VA health care system and infrastructure, while improving Veterans' health care in the community. Continuing VA's direct relationships with medical schools and teaching hospitals will help accomplish this through shared faculty, joint research initiatives, and Veterans' access to the most complex clinical services at academic medical centers.

The AAMC projects a nationwide shortage of physicians between 40,800 and 104,900 physicians by 2030. Though these shortfalls will affect all Americans, Veterans who are already in underserved areas will be among the first to feel the impact. To help address shortages at VA facilities, the AAMC applauds the efforts of both the House and Senate VA Committees to enhance recruitment of physicians to the

VA, including increasing VA graduate medical education (GME) funding for medical residency training. The AAMC also supports your proposed scholarships and loan repayment for aspiring physicians who agree to practice at the VA. We look forward to working with you to ensure these efforts are effective and improve Veteran's access to health care within the VA, as well as the cultural competency of non-VA providers for Veteran patients.

Additionally, the AAMC reiterates its commitment to enhancing VA-academic affiliations through joint ventures for space, equipment, and infrastructure. To that end, AAMC has endorsed the Enhanced Veterans Healthcare Act of 2017 (H.R. 2312). These joint ventures will help advance a seamless integration of VA facilities and services with the nation's best health care institutions.

Thank you again for your continued efforts to ensure timely and quality health care for those who have served our nation. The AAMC and our member institutions will continue to work with Congress and the VA to address the challenges and opportunities to improve care for Veterans and all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Fisher, JD

Chief Public Policy Officer