



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
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aamc.org

December 10, 2019

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chair, Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chair, House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services
Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member, House Armed Services
Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write to urge you to safeguard Military Health System (MHS) medical education programs from proposed cuts to military medical billets. Thank you for including language that would delay and study these cuts in both the House- and Senate-passed versions of the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (H.R. 2500, S. 1790).

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through innovative medical education, cutting-edge patient care, and groundbreaking medical research. Its members comprise all 154 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers, and more than 80 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their 173,000 faculty members, 89,000 medical students, 129,000 resident physicians, and more than 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) and Department of Defense (DOD) medical school and graduate medical education (GME) programs play an important role in developing the next generation of health care for military servicemembers and their families. Indeed, the mission of USUHS is to "support the readiness of America's Warfighter and the health and well-being of the military community by educating and developing uniformed health professionals, scientists and leaders; by conducting cutting-edge, military-relevant research; and by providing operational support to units around the world." USUHS supports nearly 700 medical students, and DOD teaching hospitals support nearly 4,000 medical resident FTEs, including military and civilian medical residents that rotate through these GME positions. Not only do these programs provide unique education and training with military exposure and

competencies, they also serve as a critical recruitment pipeline for military physicians and researchers.

The AAMC is concerned about the impact of the president's FY 2020 DOD budget proposal to reduce the number of military medical billets by approximately 18,000 as our country faces growing physician workforce shortages.¹ The proposed reduction in military medical FTE threatens to drastically cut the number of DOD medical faculty and their time available for teaching, furthering straining the capabilities of military medical education and their civilian academic medicine partners.

Accordingly, the AAMC supports Section 719 of the Conference report to accompany S. 1790 (H. Rept. 116-333), which would prohibit "the reduction of certain military medical personnel billets until the completion of reviews required under the FY17 NDAA to ensure any reductions or realignments will not negatively impact military health care."

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to reauthorize these critical national defense programs. We are happy work with you to help ensure the military health care workforce meets the needs of military service members and their families, and the U.S. health care workforce meets the needs of all Americans. If you have any questions regarding this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me or Matthew Shick at mshick@aamc.org or 202-8626116.

Sincerely,



Karen Fisher, JD
AAMC Chief Public Policy Officer

cc: Matthew Shick, JD, Sr. Director, AAMC Government Relations

¹ The AAMC projects a nationwide shortfall of between 46,900 to 121,900 physicians by 2032 with predicted shortages in both primary and specialty care, due in part to the 20-plus year freeze on Medicare support for graduate medical education. <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-findings-confirm-predictions-physician-shortage>