

June 17, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senate Majority Leader Thune and Senate Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the 56 undersigned national and state organizations that represent patients, healthcare providers, and health professions education programs, we are writing to express our deep concern with the higher education provisions in the House-passed budget reconciliation bill, specifically the impacts such cuts would have on health professions education and the future health care workforce in the United States. This is particularly concerning as shortages of qualified health care providers, including physicians, nurses, and behavioral health professionals, persist nationwide. **We urge the Senate to ensure that any final bill does not harm the ability of students working towards health professions degrees to pursue their education and ultimately provide high-quality health care to patients throughout the nation.**

The budget reconciliation bill that passed the House on May 22, 2025, would cut nearly \$350 billion of federal support for higher education over the next decade. These cuts would fall predominantly on programs that support students and student loan borrowers. As a group, we are especially concerned with cuts to, and/or elimination of, student financial aid and repayment programs, including student loan programs for both undergraduate and graduate students. As the Senate drafts its version of the budget reconciliation bill, to support health professions education and our future providers, we urge you to:

- **Preserve subsidized loans for undergraduates.** These loans are currently available for undergraduate students with a demonstrated financial need. The subsidy allows for the waiving of student loan interest while the borrower is enrolled at least part-time, during their grace period, and while the loan is deferred. Eliminating this loan would substantially increase the cost of borrowing for low-income undergraduate students, thus limiting access to higher education, including in health professions fields, for this population of students.
- **Retain the Grad PLUS Program.** Grad PLUS is one of the few federal programs that specifically provides financial assistance to graduate and professional students. The program is particularly important to the healthcare workforce as graduate degrees are often a requirement for licensure in many health care fields. Rather than lowering the cost of attendance, eliminating Grad PLUS will force borrowers into the private student loan market, where many would be unable to qualify for a loan or do so under much less favorable conditions. This would substantially limit access to graduate school, including in health professions fields, for low-income students, first-generation students, and Pell Grant recipients. In addition, limiting access to federal loans will also lead to a loss of protections and benefits associated with these loans, such as forbearance and deferment options, the ability to enroll in income driven repayment programs, as well Public Service Loan Forgiveness and the National Health Service Corps, which are important recruitment and retention tools for many healthcare professionals.
- **Increase the proposed aggregate limit for unsubsidized federal loans, which includes lifetime borrowing for both undergraduate and graduate education.** As careers in the healthcare fields remain in high demand by the public, to ensure the highest quality standard of care, health professions education is both rigorous and time intensive. This often requires a

substantial financial commitment from health professions students, including various costs beyond tuition, including fees unique to these degrees, as well as rising cost of living, such as housing. In fact, the median amount of debt most health professions students take on from their graduate or professional degree alone often exceeds the House proposed aggregate federal loan limit of \$150,000. Rejecting these proposed arbitrary caps on undergraduate and graduate education would reduce obstacles to health education pathways and help eliminate healthcare workforce shortages.

These priorities, along with preserving Pell Grants and Public Service Loan Forgiveness, are essential to ensuring today's health profession students become tomorrow's healthcare providers. While the House-proposed changes are individually highly concerning, in their totality they will drastically alter the make-up of degree programs nationwide and the workforce these programs produce. By greatly reducing federal support for higher education, and in particular for graduate study, the House budget reconciliation bill substantially limits access to some of the most high-demand careers over the next decade, including in the healthcare fields. This will fall the hardest on low-income and first-generation students, who have traditionally relied on federal support to finance their education.

Many Members of Congress have expressed concerns with the cuts to Medicaid that are also included in the House bill, as well as other proposed cuts to the program that are being considered. We share those concerns. However, it is important to note that any services that patients receive through Medicaid coverage require a robust health care workforce to deliver them. Without the necessary federal support to educate a highly qualified healthcare workforce, protecting Medicaid alone will not suffice. Cutting or eliminating federal support for higher education, including graduate education, will severely limit our national ability to meet the health care needs of populations in virtually every community, especially those in rural and underserved areas.

We believe that there are common sense, bipartisan approaches that Congress can take to update higher education policies that would make both undergraduate and graduate education more affordable and accessible. **However, we strongly oppose policies and actions that are harmful to students, the future health care workforce, and the communities they serve. We urge you to reject them as part of any budget reconciliation bill.** We stand ready and willing to work with you to develop bipartisan solutions so that all students, including our future health professionals, are supported in their educational pursuits, with the shared goal of improving the health and well-being of all our communities.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

Active Minds

American Academy of Physician Associates

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine

American Association of Naturopathic Physicians

American Association of Nurse Practitioners

American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists

American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American Council of Academic Physical Therapy

American Dental Education Association

American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Podiatric Medical Association
American Podiatric Medical Student Association
American Psychological Association Services
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Chiropractic Colleges
Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
Association of University Programs in Health Administration
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Council on Social Work Education
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Board for Certified Counselors & Affiliates
National Federation of Families
National League for Nursing
National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
PA Education Association
School Social Work Association of America
Youth Villages

State Organizations:

Connecticut Naturopathic Physicians Association
Illinois Association of Naturopathic Physicians
Massachusetts Society of Naturopathic Doctors
New York Association of Naturopathic Physicians
New York State Society for Clinical Social Work
Utah Association of Naturopathic Physicians
Virginia Association of Naturopathic Physicians
Wisconsin Naturopathic Doctors Association