

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS

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American
Association of
Neurological
Surgeons



Congress of
Neurological
Surgeons

CONGRESS OF
NEUROLOGICAL SURGEONS

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President
JOHN A. WILSON, MD
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President
BRIAN L. HOH, MD
Gainesville, Florida

March 24, 2021

The Honorable Robert Menendez
United State Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
United State Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United State Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: S. 834, the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act

Dear Senators Menendez, Boozman and Schumer:

On behalf of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS), representing more than 4,000 practicing neurosurgeons in the United States, we write to support your legislation, S. 834, the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act.

We are pleased that your legislation would provide 14,000 crucial new Medicare graduate medical education (GME) slots over seven years, building on the GME provisions included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260), which provided funding for 1,000 Medicare-supported GME positions. Despite increased enrollment and the establishment of additional medical and osteopathic schools, the Consolidated Appropriations Act marked the first time since 1996 that Medicare-funded medical resident positions increased.

As you know, the federal government is the largest single funding source for GME, and these contributions are essential to train the best and brightest physicians in the world. While each year's public funding to support GME tops \$16 billion, the nation continues to face an acute shortage of physicians due to an aging population and the expansion of health insurance coverage through the Affordable Care Act and other programs. According to research conducted by the Association of American Medical Colleges, the nation faces a severe shortage of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians by 2033 — with a shortfall of up to 55,200 in primary care and 86,700 in specialty care, including surgeons. The supply of surgeons is projected to have nominal growth by 2033, while projected demand is expected to increase — resulting in a shortage of between 17,100 and 28,700 surgeons by 2033.

An appropriate supply of well-educated and trained physicians — both in specialty and primary care — is essential to ensure access to quality health care services for all Americans. Unfortunately, current GME payments do not cover the actual expenses that academic medical center departments incur to train residents, straining the country's ability to support more residents to fill the physician workforce gaps. It costs approximately \$1.2 million to train a neurosurgical resident, and contributions from the government and other payers fall well short of covering this expense. Since the GME financing caps were implemented in 1997, academic medical centers have generally supported the expansion of residency programs out of departmental operational

funds. However, this is increasingly a challenge, as payments to hospitals dwindle and fewer dollars are available for cross-subsidization.

The AANS and the CNS applaud your efforts to address this serious problem and thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. We look forward to working with you to move this legislation to final passage. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



John A. Wilson, MD, President
American Association of Neurological Surgeons



Brian L. Hoh, MD, President
Congress of Neurological Surgeons

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