

FASHP

Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions

March 27, 2009

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
Chairman, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
Ranking Member, Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kennedy and Mr. Enzi:

The Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) is committed to overall reform of our nation's health care system. Created in 1968 as a forum for representatives from organizations of health professions education, FASHP addresses education's role in organizational matters of health care, encourages effective collaboration among the health professions in education and practice and prepares health professionals for the future.

FASHP member organizations seek to support Congress and the Obama administration as they move towards reform that ensures coverage of and access to safe, high-quality, cost-effective preventive services and care for patients. To achieve this goal, policymakers must pay close attention to the professional healthcare workforce and the vital role education plays in supplying the nation with health professionals. Our country is faced with a shortage of qualified health care professionals. Without a robust, diverse health professions workforce, increased coverage of health care will not result in access to high-quality, efficient, patient-centered prevention and care for all. Collectively, FASHP represents the schools that will implement innovative approaches to educate the next generation of providers who will offer this team-based, patient-centered care and we recommend the following principles be incorporated into health reform:

- We support reforms that will create a health care system that increases access to high-quality, cost-effective, and patient-centered care that is available to all. As Congress and the Obama administration develop a blueprint for the creation of such a system, we urge you to ensure that all Americans with health insurance coverage be able to retain that coverage if they so choose; all Americans eventually should be able to choose the best public or private option.
- A high performance health care system should emphasize wellness and preventive care. Rather than focusing on the treatment of acute episodes, emphasis should be placed on care coordination and disease prevention, which will improve health outcomes while reducing costs.
- To provide coordinated care to all Americans, we must have a well-educated and trained health professions workforce of all FASHP represented providers. Health reform should aim to make the best use of the capability of all providers. Increased coverage of care in and of itself will not improve health outcomes if access to care is compromised by an insufficient supply of providers. The workforce shortage must be addressed if we are to implement a system emphasizing wellness and prevention. To achieve this objective, there must be a

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stable funding source that maintains and expands existing educational infrastructure for all FASHP represented health professions.

- To ensure that a robust workforce is prepared to meet the healthcare needs of all Americans, an investment must be made to expand the faculty roster in all FASHP represented health professions schools. To some degree, all health professions schools are experiencing a shortage of educators. Without qualified faculty, attempts to reverse the shortage of health professionals will prove to be impossible, limiting their ability to increase student enrollment. Therefore, a stable funding source must be available to maintain and expand the health professions faculties.
- The composition of the health care workforce should reflect the country's population. When students from diverse backgrounds and experiences learn together, it helps health professionals acquire skills for treating people from a wide range of backgrounds, facilitates understanding of how culturally determined factors affect health and fosters innovative practices and advances that improve the health of all. New incentives should be created and existing incentives should be strengthened to increase the participation of underrepresented minorities and the financially disadvantaged in health professions education. The system should also include incentives for all FASHP represented health professionals to practice in rural and underserved areas.
- Any programs that are developed to strengthen the health professions workforce should provide for the collection and analysis of data to ensure that these programs are meeting their intended goals.

Health care reform and health professions education are inextricably linked; the above principles are FASHP's recommendations that will enable our organizations to better meet the future educational needs of the nation. FASHP is eager to support and inform your health care reform efforts. If you have any questions about the principles above, please do not hesitate to contact Erika Miller either by phone at (202) 484-1100 or by e-mail at emiller@dc-crd.com.

Sincerely,

FASHP Member Organizations

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 Dental Education Association
Association of Academic Health Centers
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
Association of Chiropractic Colleges
Association of Schools & Colleges of Optometry
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions

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**Association of Schools of Public Health
Association of University Programs in Health Admin
National League for Nursing
Physician Assistant Education Association**

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