

**Testimony of the American College of Preventive Medicine**  
**Concerning Fiscal Year 2020 HRSA Appropriations**  
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*Submitted for the Record to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on*  
*Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies – April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019*

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The American College of Preventive Medicine (ACPM) urges the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to support training for preventive medicine physicians and other public health professionals by providing **\$24 million in FY 2020 to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for the Public Health and Preventive Medicine line item in Title VII of the Public Health Service Act.** ACPM also supports the recommendation of the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition of \$690 million in FY 2020 to support all health professions and nursing education and training programs authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act.

In today's healthcare environment, the tools and expertise provided by preventive medicine physicians play an integral role in ensuring the effective functioning of our nation's public health system. These tools and skills include the ability to deliver evidence-based clinical preventive services, expertise in population-based health sciences, and knowledge of the social and behavioral determinants of health and disease. These are the tools employed by preventive medicine physicians who practice at the health system level where improving the health of populations, enhancing access to quality care, and reducing the costs of medical care are paramount. As the body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of clinical and population-based interventions continues to expand, so does the need for specialists trained in preventive medicine.

Organizations across the spectrum have recognized the growing demand for preventive medicine professionals. The Institute of Medicine released a report in 2007 calling for an expansion of

preventive medicine training programs by an “additional 400 residents per year,” and the Accreditation Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) recommends increased funding for preventive medicine residency training programs.

Preventive medicine is the only one of the 24 medical specialties recognized by the American Board of Medical Specialties *that requires and provides training in both clinical and population-based medicine*. Preventive medicine residency training programs provide a blueprint on how to train our future physician workforce; physicians trained to provide individual patient care needs as well as practice at the community and population level to identify and treat the social determinants of health. Preventive medicine physicians have the training and expertise to advance the population health outcomes that public and private payers are increasingly promoting to their providers. These physicians have a strong focus on quality care improvement and *are at the forefront of efforts to integrate primary care and public health*.

According to HRSA, and health workforce experts, there are personnel shortages in many public health occupations, including epidemiologists, biostatisticians, and environmental health workers among others. According to the 2018 Physician Specialty Data Book released by the Association of American Medical Colleges, preventive medicine is one of only six specialties that saw a decrease in the number of active physicians between 2012 and 2017. This represents a worsening trend in the number of preventive medicine physicians in the field that is not due to a lack of interest or need, but *is due to a lack of funding*. Nearly 70 percent of preventive medicine physicians are over age 55, and the funding gaps mean that there are not enough entering the field to make up for the current and expected future shortage. ACPM is deeply concerned about the shortage of preventive medicine-trained physicians and the ominous trend of even fewer

training opportunities. This deficiency in physicians trained to carry out core public health activities will lead to major gaps in the expertise needed to deliver clinical prevention and community public health services. The impact on the health of those populations served by HRSA is likely to be profound.

Despite being recognized as an underdeveloped national resource and in shortage for many years, physicians training in the specialty of Preventive Medicine are *the only medical residents whose graduate medical education (GME) costs are not supported by Medicare, Medicaid or other third party insurers*. Training occurs outside hospital-based settings and therefore is not financed by GME payments to hospitals. Both training programs and residency graduates are rapidly declining at a time of unprecedented national, state, and community need for properly trained physicians in public health, disaster preparedness, prevention-oriented practices, quality improvement, and patient safety.

Currently, residency programs scramble to patch together funding packages for their residents. Support for faculty and tuition has been almost non-existent. Directors of residency programs note that they receive many inquiries about and applications for training in preventive medicine; however, training slots often are not available for those highly qualified physicians who are not directly sponsored by an outside agency or who do not have specific interests in areas for which limited stipends are available (such as research in cancer prevention).

HRSA—as authorized in Title VII of the Public Health Service Act—is a critical funding source for several preventive medicine residency programs, as it represents the largest federal funding source for these programs.

Of note, the preventive medicine residency programs directly support the mission of the HRSA health professions programs by facilitating practice in underserved communities and promoting

training opportunities for underrepresented minorities:

- *Seventy-seven percent* of HRSA-supported preventive medicine graduates practice in medically underserved communities.
- *Nearly half* of preventive medicine training sites funded through HRSA programs were located in medically underserved communities.

In addition to training under-represented minorities and physicians who work in medically underserved areas, preventive medicine residency programs equip our society with health professionals and public health leaders who possess the tools and skills needed in the fight against the chronic disease epidemic that is threatening the future of our nation's health and prosperity. Chronic diseases currently cost the U.S. billions of dollars per year, including heart disease and stroke (\$315.4 billion per year), diabetes (\$245 billion per year), and obesity-related diseases (\$145 billion per year). Correcting the root causes of this critical problem of chronic diseases will require a multidisciplinary approach that addresses issues of access to healthcare; social and environmental influences; and behavioral choices. Any efforts to strengthen the public health infrastructure and transform our communities into places that encourage healthy choices must include measures to strengthen the existing training programs that help produce public health leaders.

Further, expanding the preventive medicine workforce strengthens the disaster preparedness capabilities we must have to ensure our nation's health security. Vulnerable populations, including those in poor health, with disabilities, and chronic diseases are at an increased risk of adverse health outcomes resulting from natural disasters. New threats are always on the horizon and some, like the Zika virus, require preventive medicine specialists working to find ways to stop the spread before it becomes an epidemic.

Many of the leaders of our nation's local and state health departments are trained in preventive medicine. Their unique combination of expertise in both medical knowledge and public health makes them ideal choices to head the fight against chronic disease as well as other threats to our nation's health, such as the opioid epidemic. Their contributions are invaluable. Investing in the residency programs that provide physicians with the training and skills to take on these leadership positions is an essential part of keeping Americans healthy and productive. As such, the American College of Preventive Medicine urges the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to reaffirm its support for training preventive medicine physicians and other public health professionals by providing **\$24 million in FY 2020 to HRSA for the Public Health and Preventive Medicine line item in Title VII of the Public Health Service Act.**