Federal Issue: Graduate Medical Education (GME)

CAP Ask:

Congress should pass legislation that expands GME funding: The Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2013 (H.R. 1190), introduced by Rep. Joe Crowley (D-NY), and Training Tomorrow’s Doctors Today Act (H.R. 1201), introduced by Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL) and Allyson Schwartz (D-PA). Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Charles Schumer (D-NY), and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced similar legislation, Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2013 (S. 577).

CAP Position:

Increased Graduate Medical Education (GME) funding is needed to address the projected decrease in the number of pathologists over the next two decades. There is little awareness that pathology faces a shortage and needs preferential treatment for pathologists in the GME funding paradigm. The media has focused primarily on the shortage of primary care physicians; less attention has been paid to shortages in specialties. CAP has successfully raised its visibility with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) on GME and begun to establish partnerships that will increase the effectiveness of our GME advocacy.

Status:

GME funding has been frozen for 16 years, and continues to be targeted for cuts in current deficit reduction packages, including President Obama’s proposed 2014 budget. There is also a danger that it could be used to offset the cost of SGR reform. Some in Congress are also interested in exploring all-payer solutions, which, while widening the funding stream, would likely engender opposition from the other payers.

Legislation in both the House and Senate would lift the GME funding cap and expand the number of funded residencies, including for specialties with a demonstrated shortage. All would phase in 15,000 additional Medicare-supported residency slots over five years and would set aside some percentage of the slots to shortage specialties. HRSA is revising its estimates of the physician workforce; their new number is expected to be larger than their 2008 prediction and close to CAP’s predicted shortage. These estimates are the basis for proving shortages - and thus eligibility for more Medicare-funded residency slots - in many of the bills.
The CAP Policy Roundtable is continuing to work on a paper that draws out public policy implications from CAP’s forecast of pathologist shortages.

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