

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

We appreciate your ongoing support of the Title VII and VIII Geriatrics Health Professions Programs at the Health Resources and Services Agency (HRSA). On behalf of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), we are writing to request increased fiscal year (FY) 2021 funding for these important programs. The AGS is a national non-profit organization comprised of nearly 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals and basic and clinical researchers dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of older Americans. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs (GWEPs) and recipients of Geriatric Academic Career Awards (GACAs) funded by HRSA are on the frontlines, ensuring their clinical and educational training can enhance their institutions' and communities' response to the pandemic and it impacts older adults.

As a member of Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA)—a diverse coalition of organizations dedicated to addressing the immediate and future workforce crisis we face in caring for an aging America—**the AGS urges you to include at least a \$10.99 million increase over the enacted FY 2020 level in the FY 2021 budget for a total of at least \$51 million for the geriatrics education and training programs under Title VII and Title VIII of the Public Health Services (PHS) Act.** As the U.S. population rapidly ages, access to a well-trained workforce and appropriate care for medically complex older adults is imperative to maintaining the health and quality of life for this growing segment of the nation's population.

Our healthcare workforce receives little, if any, training in geriatric principles,<sup>1</sup> which leaves us ill-prepared to care for older Americans as health needs evolve, especially during the current crisis. With our nation continuing to face a severe shortage of geriatrics healthcare providers and academics with the expertise to train these providers, the AGS believes it is urgent that we increase the number of educational and training opportunities in geriatrics and gerontology. The requested increase in funding over FY 2020 levels would help ensure that HRSA receives the funding necessary to expand these

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<sup>1</sup> Only 3 percent of medical students take even one class in geriatric medicine and fewer than 1 percent of RNs, pharmacists, physician assistances and physical therapists are certified in geriatrics or gerontology. Yet estimates are that by 2030, 3.5 million additional health care professionals and direct-care workers will be needed to care for older adults. 2018 Issue Brief, Eldercare Workforce Alliance, available at: [https://eldercareworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWEP\\_OnePager\\_v2.pdf](https://eldercareworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWEP_OnePager_v2.pdf)

critically important programs commensurate with the increasing need. Additional funding will also allow HRSA to expand the number of GWEPs and GACAs and move toward closing the current geographic and demographic gaps in geriatrics workforce training. As our nation works toward recovery and resilience from the pandemic, our population will continue to age, and the need for training in geriatrics and gerontology will continue to increase. The only federal programs that focus on training the workforce to care for older Americans must keep pace with that growth.

**Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs.** The GWEP is currently the only federal program designed to increase the number of providers, in a variety of disciplines, with the skills and training to care for older adults. The GWEPs educate and engage the broader frontline workforce, including family caregivers, and focus on opportunities to improve the quality of care delivered to older adults, particularly in underserved and rural areas. The GWEP was launched in 2015 by HRSA with 44 three-year grants provided to awardees in 29 states. In 2019, HRSA funded a second cohort of 48 GWEPs across 35 states and two territories (Guam and Puerto Rico) and provided extension grants to 15 former GWEP awardees. Due to GWEPs' partnerships with primary care and community-based organizations, GWEPs are uniquely positioned to rapidly address the needs of older adults and their caregivers.

**Geriatric Academic Career Awards.** The GACA program is an essential complement to the GWEP. GACAs ensure we can equip early-career clinician educators to become leaders in geriatrics education and research. It is the only federal program designed to increase the number of faculty with geriatrics expertise in a variety of disciplines. The program was eliminated in 2015 through a consolidation of several training programs. However, the program was reestablished in November 2018 when HRSA released a funding opportunity indicating their intention to fund 26 GACAs for four years starting September 1, 2019. Since 1998, original GACA recipients have trained as many as 65,000 colleagues in geriatrics expertise and have contributed to geriatrics education, research, and leadership across the U.S.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request. If you have comments or questions about HRSA funding or other issues related to the healthy aging of older Americans, please contact Anna Kim, Manager of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or [akim@americangeriatrics.org](mailto:akim@americangeriatrics.org).

Sincerely,



Sunny Linnebur, PharmD, FCCP, BCPS, BCGP  
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg  
Chief Executive Officer

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Murray:

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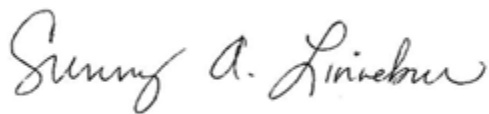
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