



For Immediate Release

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News Release

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Health Reform Bills Still Lack Strategic Focus on Health Workforce *AAHC Calls for National Entity to Address Workforce*

WASHINGTON, October 7 - Academic health center CEOs told congressional staff and representatives of national health care organizations at a congressional briefing that pending health reform legislation does not yet reflect the strategic emphasis on health workforce needed to implement successful health system reform. "Pending bills include numerous important workforce-related provisions, but they lack sufficient means to effectively coordinate workforce policy among federal, state, and private laws, regulations, and standards," said Dr. Steven A. Wartman, President and CEO of the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC).

Dr. Wartman was joined in the panel discussion by: Dr. Nancy Dickey, President, Texas A&M Health Science Center, and Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs, Texas A&M University System, immediate past AAHC Board Chair; Dr. Philip A. Pizzo, Dean, School of Medicine at Stanford University, and AAHC Board Chair; and Dr. M. Roy Wilson, Chancellor, University of Colorado Denver, and AAHC Board member.

Dr. Wilson told the group that the nation must have a national agenda for the workforce. Without such an effort, federal, state and local governments and agencies will continue to work in isolated silos as they attempt to solve workforce issues.

Dr. Dickey emphasized that health workforce reform has to start today so the nation can build a viable infrastructure and rationalize our health workforce policy. With a permanent national workforce planning body, the nation can address the full range of workforce issues -- from shortages and geographic disparities, to regulatory and policy conflicts that prevent health professionals from practicing to the full extent of their training, to the paucity of reliable data on the workforce -- in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

Dr. Pizzo cautioned that when policymakers consider changes in health care reimbursement, they must take account of the unique academic health center education and research missions, which in part are dependent on clinical revenues. The nation must ensure that reimbursement reform does not financially undermine these academic health center missions that are so vital to the nation's economy and its preeminence in education and research worldwide.

"Comprehensive health workforce reform is necessary for successful health system reform, and the key to health workforce reform is creation of a permanent, ongoing health workforce planning body," concluded Wartman.

The AAHC is a national non-profit association dedicated to advancing the nation's health and well-being through leadership in health professions education, patient care, and research. For health-related news, see the AAHC blog, www.HealthPROSe.org.

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