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*This letter was sent to the members for the House Committee on Education and Labor, Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Committee on Ways and Means, as well as the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, and the Committee on Finance.*

August 24, 2009

Dear Senator / Representative:

The Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) strongly supports the inclusion of health workforce reforms in pending House and Senate health system reform legislation because comprehensive workforce reform is essential to successful system reform. However, we remain deeply concerned that current provisions do not adequately address many of the factors contributing to the erosion of the nation's health workforce. The AAHC urges you to consider two modifications to pending bills to address this concern.

To ensure federal health workforce programs operate in a fully coordinated manner -- not just with each other, but with state and private self-regulatory programs and requirements as well -- the AAHC urges you to expand the workforce provisions in pending health reform legislation to create, for the first time, a truly integrated national health workforce planning capacity. Specifically, the AAHC recommends:

- Elevating and transforming the Advisory Committee and National Commission contained in House and Senate bills, respectively, into a National Health Workforce Planning Board with oversight - - not just advisory -- responsibilities; and
- Immediately appointing a national health workforce coordinator who can begin holding existing agencies and programs accountable for striving to achieve a far greater degree of coordination and policy integration than have been achieved in the past.

I have enclosed AAHC policy statements and education/advocacy briefs that detail AAHC concerns and recommendations. The materials are divided into two groups: a policy statement and two accompanying briefs on health workforce reform, and a policy statement and three accompanying briefs on the role of academic health centers in health system reform.

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The AAHC represents more than 100 academic health centers, with a mission to improve the nation's health care system by mobilizing and enhancing the strengths and resources of the academic health center enterprise in health professions, education, patient care, and research. We are committed to leading by example and working with you to achieve health system reform and to develop an integrated national health workforce policy agenda. We look forward to meeting with you and your staff to discuss our recommendations in more detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Wartman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven A. Wartman, MD, PhD  
President/CEO