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April 20, 2009

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Ezekiel J. Emanuel, MD, PhD
Special Advisor to the Director
for Health Policy
Office of Management and Budget
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Dr. Emanuel:

Health system reform will not be successful unless it is accompanied by comprehensive health workforce reform. Therefore, I am writing to you on behalf of the CEOs of the nation's academic health centers to request a meeting to discuss the urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated health workforce planning, a crucial perspective on health system reform that has received little attention in the health reform debate.

By their nature, changes to health workforce policy take years to produce tangible results. Workforce reform cannot wait until system reforms are already in place. We must change health workforce policy now to ensure we are ready to meet the numerous workforce challenges presented by system reforms when they take effect. Because you are a key Administration health policy thought leader, we urge you to ensure that comprehensive health workforce reform is included in the year's health system reforms.

Current piecemeal uncoordinated federal, state and private health workforce planning has not addressed the enormous and growing challenges we face. Our nation's patchwork health workforce policymaking is on the verge of being overwhelmed by rapidly intensifying social and economic pressures, which will be further magnified by health system reform. Fixing it must become a national priority before the situation gets worse. We must respond to the deteriorating condition of the nation's health workforce with a new and dynamic vision for the health workforce infrastructure needed to meet the additional challenges posed by health system reform.


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Many of the problems discussed in the AAHC's report, *Out of Order, Out of Time: The State of the Nation's Health Workforce* (enclosed), are well known. The needed solutions extend far beyond revitalizing Title VII & VIII of the Public Health Service Act and reassessing funding of graduate medical education, however. The nation is literally running out of time to establish a comprehensive, coordinated, national health workforce policy that is capable of withstanding and meeting these challenges. Therefore, the AAHC recommends that the health workforce become a priority policy issue, and that a new, collaborative, multi-stakeholder health workforce planning body be created with a mission to develop and implement comprehensive and coordinated national health workforce policy.

The AAHC, representing more than 100 academic health centers nationwide, is dedicated to improving 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. It is vitally important that health system reform recognize and strengthen, rather than undermine, academic health centers' multiple roles as the primary training ground of the nation's health workforce, the leading providers of tertiary and quaternary care, the provider of last resort in many communities, and an engine of job creation and economic development throughout the country.

The AAHC is committed to leading by example and working with you and other policymakers to develop the comprehensive, integrated national health workforce policy agenda necessary to successfully implement health system reform. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss how the nation's academic health centers can work with you and the Administration toward that goal.

Sincerely,



Steven A. Wartman, MD, PhD
President/CEO