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October 4, 2010

Dear Senator / Representative:

Now that the members of the new National Health Care Workforce Commission have been named, Congress must act to ensure the Commission's success; and, the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) looks forward to working with the Commission, members of Congress, and our members to advance this Commission's important agenda. On behalf of the AAHC, I am writing to urge Congress to take three affirmative steps necessary for the Commission to carry out its vitally important responsibilities.

Specifically, Congress must support the National Health Care Workforce Commission by doing the following:

1. *Provide adequate funding:* Congressional leaders should follow the recommendation of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies and fund the Commission enabling it to commence operation as quickly as possible.
2. *Set high expectations:* Congressional leaders should urge the Commission to adopt a more ambitious timetable than provided for in the Commission's authorizing legislation to develop and submit recommendations for policy makers in order to address the accelerating challenges facing the nation's health workforce.
3. *Actively engage the Commission on a regular basis:* Congressional leaders should engage the Commission through briefings, hearings, and other forms of public discourse throughout the year to elevate the Commission's visibility, hold Commission members accountable, and encourage dialogue about needed health workforce reforms.

The importance of swift and decisive action with respect to needed health workforce reforms cannot be overstated. Already under pressure from powerful social and economic forces – including the pending retirement of baby boom generation health professionals just as the aging of the baby boom generation is rapidly increasing demand for health care – the nation's health care workforce also must respond to increased demands resulting from recently enacted health care reforms. The longer we delay needed reforms, the harder it will be to address these workforce challenges.

October, 2010
Page 2

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. The AAHC is committed to leading by example and working with Members of Congress and the new National Health Care Workforce Commission to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, national health workforce policy before it is too late.

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, MACP
President/CEO