

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 22, 2010

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Acting Comptroller General  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We the undersigned Members of Congress are writing to request that you include a surgeon among your upcoming appointments to the National Health Care Workforce Commission. While our views may differ on the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), we agree that a health care workforce shortage is upon us and swift action must be taken to adequately and accurately address the problem.

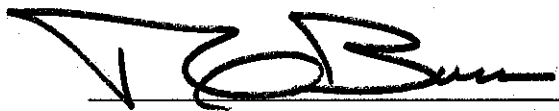
We believe it is important that the Commission, appointed to develop an action plan aimed at recruiting, training and retaining a workforce that meets both current and future needs, includes physicians with real world expertise and firsthand knowledge of the issues at stake. More specifically, we believe it is imperative that a surgeon be an active participant.

Over the last three decades, as the population of the United States has continued to grow, the surgical workforce has held steady or decreased. Many hospitals are now finding it difficult to recruit qualified surgeons. The number of general surgeons, who play an important role in staffing trauma centers, has declined significantly on a per capita basis over the last few decades. In fact, there are currently 1,183 counties nationwide without a single general surgeon and 958 counties with no surgeons of any type. There are critical shortages in other areas such as thoracic surgery where the number of practicing surgeons is already decreasing and more than half of those left are 55 or older, and the shortage is extremely pronounced in pediatric surgery.

Clearly, our nation faces current and future surgical shortages that must be addressed. While Congress has taken some steps to address these workforce challenges, more must be done to address the looming shortage of surgeons to ensure that all Americans have access to quality surgical care. Given the long lead time involved in building up surgical residency programs and the 8 to 12 years it takes to educate and train a surgeon, it is vitally important that surgeons be represented on the National Health Care Workforce Commission from the outset.

We look forward to your response, and to working with you to ensure that our nation has the robust health care workforce necessary to meet the needs of all patients.

Sincerely,



Richard Burr  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Ann Ferrell Kit Peters

John Barrasso Bob Carey, Jr.

Ben Ryan