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March 25, 2019

The Honorable Ami Bera, MD
U.S. House of Representatives
1727 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Scott Peters
U.S. House of Representatives
2338 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Larry Bucshon, MD, FACS
U.S. House of Representatives
2313 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
U.S. House of Representatives
2421 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Bera, Bucshon, Peters, and Mullin:

On behalf of the more than 80,000 members of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), I write in support of the *Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act*, H.R. 1841. This legislation would direct the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), to conduct a study on general surgery workforce shortage areas. Additionally, it would grant the Secretary the authority to provide a general surgery shortage area designation.

Increasing evidence indicates there is a current and growing shortage of surgeons available to serve our nation's population. This shortage of general surgeons is a critical component of the overall crisis in health care workforce. The ACS believes that Congress should recognize that only surgeons are uniquely trained and qualified to provide certain necessary, lifesaving procedures and are therefore an essential component of a community based health care system. The designation of formal surgical shortage areas is an important first step in achieving this goal.

HRSA has never designated a shortage area solely based upon a shortage of surgical services. In light of growing evidence indicating a shortage of general surgeons, ACS believes that research is necessary to determine exactly what constitutes a surgical shortage area and where these areas exist. Determining where patients lack access to surgical services will provide HRSA with a valuable new tool for increasing access to the full spectrum of high quality health care services. Incentivizing general surgeons to locate or remain in communities with workforce shortages could become critical in guaranteeing all Medicare beneficiaries, regardless of geographic location, have access to quality surgical care.

The ACS strongly supports the *Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act* and believes that determining what constitutes and defines a surgical shortage area is an important

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first step in ensuring access to high quality surgical care. Thank you for your efforts and continued leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

David B. Hoyt, MD, FACS
Executive Director

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