



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Inspiring Quality:

Highest Standards, Better Outcomes

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March 22, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
U.S. Senate
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Senator Nelson, and Senator Schumer:

On behalf of the more than 78,000 members of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), I write to share our views on the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2013 (S.577). This legislation seeks to bolster the U.S. surgical workforce and health care infrastructure by increasing the number of Medicare-supported residency positions, and also establishes transparency and accountability measures around graduate medical education (GME).

As you are well aware, there is a looming crisis in the medical workforce and a growing body of evidence pointing to the current and worsening shortage of surgeons. In fact, according to the Association of American Medical College's Center for Workforce Studies, there will be a shortage of 46,000 surgeons and medical specialists in the next decade. Furthermore, the ACS Health Policy Research Institute's projections show a decrease of 3,340 actively practicing surgeons between 2013 and 2028 if there are no changes in the number of surgeons being trained and if GME caps remain in place. These are startling and troubling statistics which do not bode well for our nation's aging and growing population.

Due to physician shortage concerns, ACS is pleased that S.577 would increase the number of residency slots nationally by 3,000 each year from 2015 through 2019, totaling 15,000 slots. Although the College would prefer that Congress lift the present caps on GME funding entirely, the ACS supports this provision included in S.577 for taking an important step toward addressing physician workforce shortages.

It is clear that the needed services of surgeons and physicians are under great stress, and this shortage will create serious complications for the medical



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100 years

patient and our health care system overall. Increasing the number of Medicare-supported residency positions as included in S.577 would help to ensure that individuals across America have access to vital and high-quality health care services, and during a time when it is needed most.

Again, thank you for your continued leadership on health care access issues. We look forward to working with you as Congress considers GME policies and other issues impacting the physician workforce and patient access to quality care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David B. Hoyt".

David B. Hoyt, MD FACS
Executive Director

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