



December 15, 2015

To: Senator Clausen, Representative Mack and Members of the Legislative Health Care Workforce Commission

On behalf of the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA), the professional association for the more than 10,000 physicians, medical residents and medical students throughout Minnesota, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the recommendations of the Legislative Health Care Workforce Commission that will address Minnesota's primary care physician workforce shortage. The MMA appreciates the work of the Legislative Health Care Workforce Commission to address the needs of our health care workforce.

The MMA has made expanding Minnesota's primary care physician workforce one of its top priorities. As you know, we brought together a task force in 2013 to examine the issue, and some of their findings were as follows:

- Minnesota needs a state entity that will serve the purpose of providing guidance and analysis regarding how Minnesota can effectively meet its physician workforce objectives.
- Minnesota needs to examine ways to increase clinical training sites for medical students. The limited number of clinical training sites, the time needed to serve as a clinical preceptor, and the lack of incentives that are provided to clinical preceptors serve as barriers to students having meaningful clinical experiences.
- The limited number of available residency slots serve as a barrier to expanding our primary care physician workforce.

Several of the recommendations you have identified reflect the conclusions reached by the MMA's Primary Care Physician Workforce Task Force, as well as efforts related to our new MMA Preceptor Initiative – thank you again for supporting those and for acknowledging their importance.

I want to specifically call out the recommendations that we believe are critical for progress to occur:

- Recommendation #1 – a state health professions council. The MMA would urge that this item continue to be a priority of the Commission. It is clear that more coordinated conversations are needed within the community if we are to successfully target resources and energies to address workforce needs.
- Recommendation #3 – expanded funding for loan forgiveness. Great success was seen in expansion of the loan forgiveness program during the 2015 legislative session. Loan forgiveness, and targeting this

support for primary care physicians, is an essential and effective strategy for addressing the overall shortage.

- Recommendation #17 – assessing the feasibility of obtaining a CMS waiver. The limited number of residency slots, and the issues associated with GME funding need to be addressed. A CMS waiver could potentially link GME funding to Minnesota’s primary care physician workforce needs – an option that needs to be further explored.
- Recommendation #18 – reinstate the ACA Medicaid payment bump. Adequate Medicaid primary care payment rates are essential to ensuring patient access to care. Minnesota has generally under-invested in its primary care payment rates and this targeted approach would not only help to sustain patient access to care, but also acknowledge the value of primary care services.
- Recommendations #19, #20, #21, and #23 – clinical training sites and preceptors. Clinical preceptors serve the important role of preparing our future physician workforce. If we are to have a workforce that is ready to meet the needs of Minnesota, we need to ensure that clinical preceptors that take the time to teach are fully supported in their role.

Finally, expanding our primary care physician workforce is about more than just increasing the supply. It is about reinvigorating the practice of primary care – to keep the number of physicians we have, and to make the profession more attractive to physicians-in-training. The MMA remains dedicated to helping make that happen – both through the Legislature and through community-based efforts.

Thank you, again, for identifying the steps needed to support continued patient access to care. On behalf of the MMA, I look forward to working with all of you in translating your hard work into concrete solutions for Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Thorson, MD', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Thorson, MD
President