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*Devoted to Advocacy, Education & Action*

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The Honorable John Shimkus  
2452 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

November 25, 2014

Dear Representative Shimkus:

On behalf of the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians, I am writing to express my strong support for the extension of funding for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program. As you know, the THCGME funding supports Teaching Health Centers all over the country. Today, 36 Teaching Health Centers train more than 300 residents who are providing more than 700,000 primary care visits in underserved communities nationwide. *Illinois has one of the eleven teaching health centers:* A consortium including McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University, Erie Family Health Center and Norwegian American Hospital.

With funding expiring in fiscal year 2015, we are facing difficult decisions with our accrediting agencies in January, which could result in closure of certain THCs. As such, I strongly encourage you to support legislation that is being considered that will provide short-term funding to maintain the THCs and this program.

Your support of THCGME legislation will provide THCs with confidence that funding will be available for their programs in Academic Year 2015-2016 – so that McGaw, Erie, and Norwegian can continue building on the success of their residency programs that serve some of the most underserved areas in Illinois. Physicians trained in health centers are 3 times more likely to work in a community health centers or other safety-net primary care settings. All eight of last year's graduates from the Northwestern McGaw Family Medicine Residency stayed in primary care settings, seven remained at community health centers and five stayed at Erie.

We are grateful for your careful consideration of this urgent request and these ongoing efforts to provide longer-term stability for this critical program next year.

Your support of this important initiative is critical. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Vincent D. Keenan, CAE  
Executive Vice President

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