

January 16, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

As you well know, the 115th U.S. Congress has been sworn in and is already at work; the peaceful transition of power from one Administration to another will occur later this week. To say a “change is in the air” would be an understatement! And while we know change can be exciting, and challenging, and sometimes even difficult—it is also constant.

I am writing to you today to talk about another constant: the strong commitment of the AAFP to you—our valued members—and to the patients we serve. As we prepare for the debates, and votes, and media coverage surrounding a host of issues that will impact health care in our country, it’s important that all members understand the AAFP’s priorities in representing each of you and your patients—priorities approved by our Board of Directors based upon our Strategic Plan and policies approved by our Congress of Delegates over many years.

It’s also important for you to know that the AAFP has developed a reputation in Washington as a trusted advocate for family physicians, our patients, and our health care system. We have achieved significant policy advances during both Republican and Democratic Administrations and Congresses. This is due, in large measure, to our non-partisan commitment to our mission, and our dedication to holding elected officials accountable for policies and proposals that do not align with, or support, that mission.

I can assure you that this commitment will continue with the new Administration and Congress—and was clearly evident the day following the last national election, when I [wrote to President-elect Trump](#) outlining our priorities, our desire to work with him and his new Administration, and our intent to hold them accountable in advancing the important matters impacting the health and health care of our nation and its people. On December 28, I sent a similar [letter to the bipartisan leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate](#).

These letters highlighted the key objectives for which we will be advocating in the coming days, weeks and months:

- the importance of maintaining and expanding affordable health insurance coverage for all;
- the important need for payment reform that supports and sustains family medicine and primary care as foundational to a better health care system;
- the need for attention to the Primary Care Workforce needs of our country and reform to its funding;
- the importance of prevention and wellness, as well as special attention to the social determinants of health and health equity; and
- the need to reduce the administrative and regulatory burden experienced by family physicians in their practices.

We are in the opening stages of what surely will be a long and sustained debate over how we, as a nation, can best provide affordable, high-quality health care to all Americans. This is not the first time our country has engaged in this debate, and I am confident it will not be the last! But you have my commitment—along with that of your Board of Directors—that the AAFP will advance and defend our priorities and policies to both Congress and the Administration throughout this process on behalf of our patients and each of you.

I would also note that the AAFP remains concerned about recent trends where legislators, at various levels of government, have attempted to dictate the nature and content of patients' interactions with their physicians or—through legislation—unduly influence the practice of medicine. These efforts are outside the traditional bounds of the role of legislators in overseeing health care and are direct intrusions into the practice of medicine; they infringe upon the patient-physician relationship in a negative manner. The AAFP will continue to oppose legislative and regulatory efforts that do not respect the important relationship between a patient and his or her family physician.

In closing, let me remind us all of the greatest strength of our organization—our inclusivity. The AAFP is made up of individual family physicians of many diverse backgrounds, practicing in many and varied settings. Please know that each one of you has value, you are respected, and you have a voice and a place in the AAFP. We need you to continue to do the good work of caring for patients—indeed, for all Americans.

Be assured that the AAFP is working daily to promote and protect the best interests of our patients and our specialty. But we need your help. I encourage you to participate in our [Speak Out program](#), which provides resources and tools to help you communicate with your elected officials on important public policy issues. Thank you!

Sincerely,

John Meigs, Jr., MD, FAAFP
AAFP President