

July 14, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Cc: Congressional Leadership

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the more than 240,000 surgeons we represent and the millions of patients who depend on us for access to surgical care, we, the undersigned organizations, write in strong opposition to reductions to Medicare and Medicaid's support of graduate medical education (GME) as part of a deficit reduction proposal.

It is our understanding that reductions to GME are currently under consideration. As you know, Medicare provides the largest source of support for graduate medical education in the United States. However, Medicare's support of graduate medical education has been essentially frozen since 1997 and, as a result, physician shortages have steadily grown.

According to an analysis by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Center for Workforce Studies, by 2025 there will be a shortage of 130,600 physicians, including 64,800 surgeons, anesthesiologists and other specialists. The ratio of surgeons to population is expected to further decline as millions of Baby Boomers retire in the coming years. Reductions to federal investments in the physician workforce would further exacerbate this crisis.

Cuts to Medicare and Medicaid supported graduate medical education would result in ever growing shortages of physicians and reduced access to high quality health care. While we understand the need to reduce deficits and get our nation's debt under control, we urge you not to reduce access to physicians and the needed medical care they provide in the process.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
American Academy of Ophthalmology
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Surgeons
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopaedics
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Breast Surgeons

American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons
American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgeons
American Society of Plastic Surgeons
American Urological Association
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons