



October 19, 2018

The Honorable Seth Moulton
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gregg Harper
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Rep. Moulton and Rep. Harper:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express our support for the Healthcare Extension and Accessibility for Developmentally disabled and Underserved Population (HEADs UP) Act of 2018, H.R. 6611. The HEADs UP Act would designate individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) as a Medically Underserved Population (MUP) under federal law. ACP strongly supports this objective and greatly appreciates your efforts to make federal support and programs more accessible to patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 154,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

The American College of Physicians is concerned by the lack of action taken by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to change the MUP designation to benefit I/DD individuals better. Studies have found a gap between the needs of I/DD patients and the type of care they can access in their communities, which results in poorer health outcomes and higher rates of mortality, co-morbidities, and chronic conditions. Individuals with I/DD have greater community engagement when they have access to appropriate resources and are not bound by poor health conditions ([Ervin 2014](#)). In the past, the College has [called on](#) HRSA to provide I/DD persons with a MUP designation to improve access to care and increase the number of health clinicians to care for them, including physicians.

The HEADs UP act would expand the MUP designation to include individuals with I/DD. This designation opens up a range of federal health programs to I/DD individuals and bolsters the health clinician workforce, including physicians, that cares for the I/DD population. The bill would allow planning, operating and infant mortality grants that focus on individuals with I/DD to be included in federal funding to health centers, which would increase primary care access for these individuals. The legislation would also make it possible for I/DD individuals to be designated as a population group in a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). A HPSA designation would make health clinicians, including physicians, who provide care to the I/DD community eligible for loan payment and training programs, like the National Health Service Corps under HRSA.

We applaud your efforts to help I/DD individuals through the HEADs UP Act of 2018. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation and stand ready to serve as a resource for you on any matters regarding individuals with developmental disabilities and the physician workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ana María López".

Ana María López, MD, MPH, MACP
President