March 4, 2009

Peter Orszag Director Office of Management and Budget 725 17th Street, NW Washington, DC 20503 Mary Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN Administrator-Designate Health Resources and Services Administration 5600 Fishers Lane Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Director Orszag and Dr. Wakefield:

The undersigned group of concerned National Health Service Corps (NHSC) stakeholder associations writes to urge increased funding for the NHSC in the FY 2010 budget request. The coalition represents the multiple health professions, institutions, and underserved areas/populations that benefit from the program's scholarship and loan repayment awards.

The NHSC is widely recognized (both in Washington and in the underserved areas it helps) as a success on many fronts. It improves access to health care for the growing numbers of underserved Americans, provides incentives for practitioners to enter primary care, reduces the financial burden that the cost of health professions education places on new practitioners, and helps ensure access to health professions education for students from all backgrounds.

However, in the past five years funding for the NHSC has been cut by over \$47 million, a 27 percent reduction from the \$171 million in FY 2003 that was already insufficient to meet the nation's needs. As a result, the NHSC has reduced the number of new annual scholarship and loan repayment awards by over 30 percent during that period (from 1,353 awards in FY 2003 to 943 in FY 2008).

By its own calculation, the NHSC falls more than 30,000 short of a field strength that would begin to meet the needs of the nation's underserved areas. While the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (P.L. 111-5) provides an important boost over the next two years, the NHSC estimates it will result in at most 4,250 additional NHSC practitioners. Furthermore, these additional practitioners will be lost in future years if the NHSC is unable to fund award continuations or maintain the same level of new annual awards.

As the nation faces serious health professions shortages, additional funding is necessary to address this deficiency by increasing new NHSC annual awards and the total NHSC field strength. This was the primary recommendation National Advisory Council on the National Health Service Corps' March 2007 report, "Priorities for Reauthorization and Legislative Updates."

For FY 2010, the NHSC stakeholders recommend a combined appropriation of \$235 million for the NHSC. This figure represents the amount authorized under the "Health Care Safety Net Act of 2008" (P.L. 110-355) for NHSC Recruitment (\$156,235,150) with a proportionate increase in the NHSC Field appropriation. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Shick at <mshick@aamc.org> or 202-862-6116.

Sincerely,

The National Health Service Corps stakeholder associations

Administrators of Internal Medicine Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine American Academy of Family Physicians American Academy of Nurse Practitioners American Academy of Pediatrics American Academy of Physician Assistants American Association of Colleges of Nursing American College of Nurse-Midwives American College of Physicians American Dental Education Association American Dental Hygienists' Association American Medical Association American Medical Student Association American Osteopathic Association American Psychiatric Association Association of American Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine Association of American Medical Colleges Association of Community Health Nursing Educators Association of Departments of Family Medicine Association of Family Medicine Residency Directors Association of Professors of Medicine Association of Program Directors of Internal Medicine Association of Specialty Professors Clerkship Directors in Internal Medicine Committee of Interns and Residents/Service Employees International Union National Association of Community Health Centers National Rural Health Association

North American Primary Care Research Group

Society of Teachers of Family Medicine