

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-222, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leaders Schumer and McCarthy:

As Congress swiftly works to address the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on the country, the undersigned organizations of the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) respectfully urge you to consider the unique economic and educational needs of the nation's health professions schools and students, and the associations that represent them, in any federal legislative or stimulus package.

FASHP was created in 1968 as a forum for representatives of health professions education institutions to address education's role in organizational patterns of health care; to encourage effective collaboration among the professions in education and practice; to prepare health professions education for the future; and to serve as a liaison with other organizations sharing an interest in health professions education. FASHP is comprised of 18 associations representing a health professions education community that includes 7,429 programs, institutions, hospitals, and health systems, and more than 1.3 million students, faculty, clinicians, administrators, residents, and researchers.

We are highly concerned that, at a time when the importance of a well-trained health care workforce has become urgently critical, the disruption by the pandemic will threaten the ability of our programs to prepare the future health care workforce and impede the ability to send recent graduates into the workforce in a timely manner. In particular, the pandemic has triggered unique challenges for health professions schools and students, including the elimination and hurdles of pursuing clinical training opportunities, delayed testing and graduations, and challenges in accessing federal student aid to continue training.

Our nation already faced a shortage of health care professionals; now more than ever is a robust workforce pipeline critical to educate, sustain, and meet our country's growing health care needs. In particular, as additional COVID-19 legislation and proposals are negotiated, FASHP urges the inclusion of provisions addressing health professions students and schools, including:

- Flexibility and relief around student loans for current and graduated health professions students;
- Uninterrupted administration of federal grants and emergency aid to assist health professions schools and students;
- Flexibility of certain statutory and regulatory requirements; and
- Flexibility during the implementation of regulations impacting health professions schools and students.

Additionally, health professions education associations serve as a lifeline of resources and a direct link to the federal and state levels, especially in a public health crisis. These membership organizations are also critical think tanks, spotting trends and addressing challenges that our professions, practitioners, and institutions will face in six-months, one-year, five-years and beyond. By engaging with their members, the health profession educators of our nation, these associations develop solutions to issues that are only beginning to emerge and work proactively with our policymakers to ensure these solutions become a reality. However, due to the unprecedented pandemic, our associations are suffering considerable financial harm due to cancellation of events, conferences, and other modalities that are primary revenue streams. Without swift action, many associations will be financially impaired – some permanently – thus unable to provide essential services to member schools and students during this critical time. Therefore, we also request the inclusion of non-profit associations protections within any final federal aid package.

As Congress continues to deliberate on important measures to reassure and spur the nation's economy, we urge you to include provisions that directly address the unique challenges that health professions students and schools, and the associations they represent, face. The vital role education plays in equipping the nation with highly educated health care professionals is especially crucial as we combat COVID-19.

FASHP looks forward to continuing our work with Congress during these challenging times. For additional information, please contact Judith Mun, Director of Government Relations, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, at jmun@aacom.org or 301-580-0284.

Sincerely,

American Association of Colleges of Nursing
 American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
 American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
 American Association of Colleges of Podiatric Medicine
 American Dental Education Association
 American Physical Therapy Association
 American Psychological Association
 Association of Accredited Naturopathic Medical Colleges
 Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges
 Association of Chiropractic Colleges
 Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions
 Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry
 Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
 Council on Social Work Education
 Physician Assistant Education Association