

For Immediate Release:

Cuts to Doctor Training Will Hurt the Nation's Health, Economy

Washington, D.C., September 19, 2011—*AAMC President and CEO Darrell G. Kirch, M.D., issued the following statement today on President Obama's plan for economic growth and deficit reduction:*

“The long-term cost to the nation's health will far outweigh the near-term savings offered by President Obama's deficit-reduction plan. By forcing drastic cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, this proposal will hurt beneficiaries, exacerbate the already critical shortage of doctors in this country, and cost tens of thousands of jobs that America can't afford to lose.

The dramatic cuts to graduate medical education (GME) as proposed in the president's plan would reduce the ability of teaching hospitals and physicians to care for the most vulnerable in our communities. AAMC-member teaching hospitals represent 6 percent of hospitals, yet provide 21 percent of Medicare and 28 percent of Medicaid care. Today, public reimbursements to teaching hospitals are already less than the cost of caring for their patients. Making additional cuts to reimbursements would only penalize those who need health care the most—seniors and the underserved.

Funding cuts focused disproportionately on teaching hospitals—the places that train the nation's doctors, nurses, and first responders—will worsen critical shortages of health care professionals at a time when another 32 million Americans will be entering the system as a benefit of the president's own health care legislation. Such cuts would mean that up to 10,000 fewer physicians will be trained every year when the nation already faces a shortage of over 90,000 doctors in the next 10 years.

The nation's medical schools and teaching hospitals have invested heavily in ways to make health care more efficient and affordable, including training new teams of providers. At the same time, these institutions maintain vital services such as 24/7 trauma and burn units that often are unavailable elsewhere in communities while treating some of the most complex illnesses and injuries.

America's medical schools and teaching hospitals also directly employ almost two million people, including more than half a million nurses. Cutting funds that support training will make caring for Medicare and Medicaid patients a challenge, and lead to the direct loss of up to 20,000 jobs in American communities—health care jobs from nursing to custodial staff.

Reducing the deficit is essential. But cutting funds for doctor training is a bad idea that will hurt the nation's health.”

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The Association of American Medical Colleges is a not-for-profit association representing all 135 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 400 major teaching hospitals and health systems, including 62 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and nearly 90

academic and scientific societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC represents 128,000 faculty members, 75,000 medical students, and 110,000 resident physicians. Additional information about the AAMC and U.S. medical schools and teaching hospitals is available at www.aamc.org/newsroom.