

May 20, 2009

The Honorable Joseph Crowley
United States House of Representatives
2404 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Crowley:

On behalf of our more than 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 40,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to express our strong support for H.R. 2251, the *Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2009*.

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105-33) froze the number of residency positions at the 1996 level. However, several studies have projected a substantial physician shortage in the coming years. H.R. 2251 helps address our nation's physician shortage by expanding by 15 percent the current number of Medicare-supported physician residency training positions – an approximate increase of 15,000 slots. Preference in distributing these slots would be given to programs training physicians in primary care and general surgery. Additionally, the measure prevents the loss of residency slots if a hospital closes by redistributing them to nearby hospitals. Under current law, these residencies are lost upon closure. Lastly, the bill expands hospitals' flexibility in training residents in clinical, non-hospital settings such as community health centers, freestanding clinics and physician offices.

Recent data project that by 2030, the number of Americans over the age of 65 will double from 35 million to 71 million. And, the demand for health care services will continue to rise with the growing needs of the 78 million "baby boomers" who will begin to retire in 2010. Without decisive intervention, these trends will have a serious impact on hospitals' ability to care for patients and communities. Your bill will help promote the training of new physicians and increase access to health care services.

We commend you for your efforts to ensure a thriving physician workforce and look forward to working with you to ensure the passage of H.R. 2251.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack
Executive Vice President

