

April 16, 2024

The Honorable Senator John Kennedy
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Eric Schmitt
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kennedy and Schmitt:

On behalf of the 27 undersigned medical organizations, we are writing to express our opposition to any legislation that would bar medical schools from receiving federal funding, including participation in guaranteed student loan programs, if they engage in activities such as having a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) office and/or provide education on structural or institutional racism.

DEI programs in medical education serve to address the current and historical underrepresentation of certain groups in the field of medicine, improve health outcomes of underserved and marginalized communities, promote equity and understanding among clinicians and patients, and facilitate quality care through an inclusive physician workforce. Additionally, DEI programs in medical education are intended to cultivate the development of physicians who can effectively care for diverse populations. This helps improve health care delivery for all patients.

Research¹ indicates that a diverse medical student body² leads to improved cultural competence and can ultimately help physicians better meet the needs of patients of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. In considering race and ethnicity, schools cite the educational benefits of student body diversity and emphasize that racial and ethnic diversity are particularly important.³

There are also significant benefits to patients related to DEI programs in medical schools. According to an article published in the JAMA Network Open,⁴ there is a better life expectancy among patients in areas with Black primary care physicians. Counties with high Black American physician population representation experienced lower disparities in mortality rates between Black and White residents and were linked to longer life expectancy. Additionally, studies have found that patients with racially concordant physicians have experienced improvements in outcomes⁵ and rates of preventive services,⁶ which demonstrates the

¹ Educational Benefits of Diversity in Medical School: A Survey of Students

D. Whitla, G. Orfield, +3 authors J. Reede, Published in *Academic medicine : journal...* 1 May 2003.

² Student Body Racial and Ethnic Composition and Diversity-Related Outcomes in US Medical Schools
Somnath Saha, MD, MPH; Gretchen Guiton, PhD; Paul F. Wimmers, PhD; et al LuAnn Wilkerson, EdD
JAMA. 2008;300(10):1135-1145. doi:10.1001/jama.300.10.1135.

³ Association of American Medical Colleges. Brief as amici curiae in support of respondents. *Grutter v Bollinger*, 539 US 306 (2003)

⁴ Snyder JE, Upton RD, Hassett TC, Lee H, Nouri Z, Dill M. Black Representation in the Primary Care Physician Workforce and Its Association With Population Life Expectancy and Mortality Rates in the US. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2023;6(4):e236687. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.6687

⁵ Greenwood BN, Hardeman RR, Huang L, Sojourner A. Physician-patient racial concordance and disparities in birthing mortality for newborns. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 2020Aug17;117(35):21194-200.

⁶ Alsan M, Garrick O, Granziani GC. Does Diversity Matter for Health? Experimental Evidence from Oakland. *American Economic Review [Internet]*. 2018Jun [cited 2020];109(12):4071-111. Available from: National Bureau of Economic Research.

importance of recruitment and retention of physicians of underrepresented backgrounds. Therefore, policies⁷ that address disparities and discrimination, and the physician workforce are a key component to a comprehensive and overarching approach to eliminating disparities in health and healthcare.

To further nurture and grow a diverse physician pathway, medical schools must undertake efforts to eliminate the barriers that prevent underrepresented students from attending and completing medical school. Education quality and access must be equitable for those of all backgrounds to ensure a diverse medical professional pathway; it also must provide the health care workforce with the necessary knowledge and skills to care for people of all backgrounds and in all corners of our country.

Therefore, we support actions to achieve such diversity, equity, and inclusion, including DEI programs in medical education.

Sincerely,

American College of Physicians
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases
American College of Chest Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Geriatrics Society
Academic Pediatric Association
American Pediatric Society
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Society of Hematology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society for Transplantation and Cellular Therapy
American Thoracic Society
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Endocrine Society
Gerontological Society of America
Infectious Diseases Society of America
National Medical Association
Pediatric Policy Council
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Pediatric Research
Society of Critical Care Medicine
Society of General Internal Medicine
Society of Hospital Medicine
The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Medicine

⁷ Serchen J, Doherty R, Hewett-Abbott G, Atiq O, Hilden D; Health and Public Policy Committee of the American College of Physicians. Understanding and Addressing Disparities and Discrimination In Education and in the Physician Workforce: A Position Paper of the American College of Physicians. Philadelphia: American College of Physicians; 2021. (Available from American College of Physicians, 190 N Independence Mall West, Philadelphia, PA 19106.)

