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October 3, 2011

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
United States Senate  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Nelson:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am pleased to offer our support for S. 1627, the "Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2011," which would expand the number of Medicare-supported graduate medical education (GME) positions by 15 percent (approximately 15,000 additional GME positions) over five years.

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 capped the number of resident physicians each teaching hospital could claim for reimbursement under Medicare. Since Medicare does not reimburse teaching hospitals for training residents beyond the capped number of GME slots, core GME training programs have experienced minimum growth. While new U.S. allopathic and osteopathic medical schools are opening and many medical schools are expanding their enrollments to meet the nation's need for more physicians, GME training is also necessary for medical licensure in all states.

In 2010, the Association of American Medical Colleges projected a shortage of 130,000 physicians across all specialties by 2025. An alarming number of state and national specialty medical societies are also reporting current and future physician shortages. We believe that the "Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2011" would represent a significant step toward addressing physician shortages and ensuring access to care by increasing the number of GME positions.

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD