



AAPA Statement for the Record Submitted to the Senate Committee on the Budget In Response to the Hearing: “How Primary Care Improves Health Care Efficiency.”

March 6, 2024

Dear Chairman Whitehouse, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the more than 168,000 physician associates/physician assistants (PAs) throughout the United States, the American Academy of Physician Associates (AAPA) thanks Senator Whitehouse, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the committee for your commitment and dedication to patients across the nation. AAPA applauds Senator Whitehouse and the committee for holding this hearing, *How Primary Care Improves Health Care Efficiency*, and for his dedication to patients and their access to high-quality primary care services.

PAs are licensed clinicians who practice medicine in every specialty and setting, including primary care and family medicine. PAs diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, manage their own patient panels, and often serve as a patient’s primary healthcare provider. PAs practice medicine in every state, the District of Columbia, and all U.S. territories. PA scope of practice is determined by the PA’s education and experience, state law, facility policy, and the needs of patients. In 2022, more than 20% of PAs practiced in primary care (defined as family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics).

As the model of primary care in the United States continues to evolve from a traditional, physician-centric model to a more streamlined, efficient, and patient-centric model, the roles and responsibilities of PAs and other highly qualified non-MD/DO healthcare professionals will continue to evolve. As Congress works to address healthcare shortages, it is critical that PAs and other providers are authorized to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

AAPA applauds Senator Whitehouse and the committee for engaging in a meaningful discussion about improving primary care for Medicare patients. Making smarter and adequate investments in primary care can both improve health outcomes and contribute to a more financially stable Medicare program. AAPA is excited to engage in bipartisan discussions in Congress and work with other stakeholders to improve both access to healthcare and health outcomes for all Americans.

As the committee considers policies to ensure timely access to high-quality care for all patients, AAPA encourages the committee to embrace opportunities to reduce provider barriers and burdens wherever they interfere with optimizing patient care and access.

AAPA thanks the committee for the opportunity to submit this statement and for your ongoing dedication to our nation’s healthcare providers and the patients they serve. We are committed to working with Congress to advance our shared mission of improving access to healthcare in the United States. If we can be of assistance on this or any issue, please do not hesitate to contact Tate Heuer, AAPA Vice President, Federal Advocacy, at theuer@aapa.org.