



February 22, 2017

The Honorable Jon Tester
U.S. Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-2604

Dear Senator Tester:

On behalf of the more than 115,000 PAs (physician assistants) represented by the American Academy of PAs (AAPA), I am writing to thank you for your leadership in introducing S. 426, the Grow Our Own Directive: PA Employment and Education Act of 2017.

As you are well aware, there is a high vacancy rate for PAs throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) healthcare system. A lack of attention to recruitment and retention of PAs by the VA, coupled with the high demand and economic reward for PAs in the private healthcare market, has resulted in a significant challenge for the VA to fill PA positions.

The GOOD Pilot Program, designed to create a pathway for veterans to become educated as PAs, is a creative, two-pronged investment for our nation's veterans. The GOOD Pilot Program supports veterans in becoming part of a well-respected healthcare profession with a longstanding commitment to veterans and veterans' health; additionally, the program will add to the supply of PAs in VA medical facilities. S. 426 will also require the VA to establish a national strategic plan to recruit and retain PAs, including the adoption of standards leading to competitive pay for PAs employed by the VA.

Ready access to quality patient care is among the most critical issues facing our nation's veterans. AAPA is thrilled that you have sponsored this legislation to increase the PA workforce through the GOOD Pilot Program. This inventive model, along with needed policy improvements, holds great promise for the recruitment and retention of PAs at the VA. We are particularly pleased that the GOOD Pilot Program will provide priority to veterans who are from rural communities and who are willing to commit to providing care as PAs in VA facilities located in rural communities.

AAPA is very pleased to support the Grow Our Own Directive: PA Employment and Education Act of 2017, and we look forward to working with you to enact it. For further information, please do not hesitate to have your staff contact Tate Heuer, AAPA Vice President, Federal Advocacy, at 571-319-4338 or at theuer@aapa.org.

Sincerely,

Jennifer L. Dorn
Chief Executive Officer