



Statement by

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On

The President's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget

Before the

**Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate**

May 7, 2014

Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Moran, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) budget request for fiscal year 2015. HRSA is the primary federal agency charged with improving access to health care services for people who are medically underserved because of their economic circumstances, geographic isolation, or serious chronic disease. Our FY 2015 Budget addresses these issues by providing critical investments in programs that bolster our primary care infrastructure, strengthen the health care workforce, and improve health equity.

Bolster Primary Care Infrastructure

To bolster the nation's primary care infrastructure, the Budget includes \$4.6 billion for the Health Center program, which supports community-based, patient-directed organizations that provide comprehensive primary care services in medically underserved communities. Health centers provide a wide range of medical, dental, and behavioral services, often making all of these services available at one location. It is important to note is that nearly half of all health centers serve rural populations. The FY 2015 investment will allow health centers serve approximately 31 million patients, at nearly 9,500 service delivery sites and provide care in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Basin. The Budget also allocates \$100 million to fund 150 new health center sites that will serve an additional 900,000 patients.

Strengthen Health Care Workforce

HRSA is also charged with strengthening the health care workforce by supporting the education and distribution of a highly skilled primary care workforce through training, curriculum development, and scholarship and loan repayment programs. To this end, the Budget provides \$1.8 billion for health workforce programs and makes new and strategic investments to strengthen our supply of health care providers that are well-distributed throughout the country.

One of our most important primary care workforce programs is the National Health Service Corps. Employed by local rural health clinics, community health centers, and other primary care sites, Corps clinicians work every day to promote health and treat illness and injury in rural and urban areas of the country where access to care is limited and where shortages of health care professionals persist. Nearly half of all current Corps providers work in rural communities. The President's Budget includes \$810 million for the Corps in FY 2015, which represents the largest level of funding in the history of the Corps. This level of funding is projected to support an annual field strength of more than 15,000 providers over FYs 2015-2020 and serve the primary health care needs of more than 16 million patients annually.

HRSA will also invest in our nation's health workforce through the new Targeted Support for Graduate Medical Education (GME) program, which will expand residency training in primary care and other high-need specialties with the goal of encouraging innovation in training models and greater accountability for GME funds. This program will support 13,000 residents over 10 years through competitive grants to teaching hospitals, children's hospitals, and community-based consortia of teaching hospitals and/or other health care entities.

The Budget also invests \$144 million to develop the nation's nursing workforce through programs that, among other strategies, support the enhancement of advanced nursing education and practice, increased nursing education opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, and an expanded nursing pipeline. The Budget also provides for two new workforce initiatives, including \$10 million to support a new Clinical Training in Interprofessional Practice program to increase the capacity of community-based primary health care teams to deliver quality care. In addition, \$4 million is provided to fund new Rural Physician Training grants to help rural-focused training programs recruit and graduate students likely to practice medicine in rural communities.

Achieve Health Equity

HRSA considers our work with special populations and eliminating health disparities a top priority. The Budget includes \$2.3 billion for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to improve and expand access to care for persons living with HIV/AIDS. As a payor of last resort, the Ryan White Program funds services not covered by health insurance but which are nonetheless critical to ensuring that individuals living with HIV are linked into care and started on anti-retroviral drug regimens. Due to the Affordable Care Act, many Ryan White clients will continue to gain access to health insurance or see improvements in their current health insurance coverage in FY 2015. In response to these changes, as well as the evolving nature of the epidemic, the federal government will continue to coordinate closely with state and local governments and

Ryan White Program grantees to ensure that vulnerable populations living with HIV have regular access to quality HIV care and life-extending medications.

The Budget also proposes better serve the needs for women, infants, children and youth by consolidating funds from Part D of the Ryan White program to Part C. The consolidated program will emphasize care across all vulnerable populations and will allow resources to be better targeted to points along the HIV care continuum and to populations most in need throughout the country.

One of our largest programmatic areas focused on special populations is our maternal and child health programs. The HRSA budget includes funding through FY 2024 to extend and expand the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, through which states are implementing evidence-based home visiting programs that enable nurses, social workers, and other professionals to work with at-risk families and to connect them to assistance that supports the child's health, development, and ability to learn. These programs are strictly voluntary and have been shown to improve maternal and child health and developmental outcomes, improve parenting skills and school readiness.

In addition to the investments in health centers and the National Health Service Corps that will improve access to health care in rural areas, the Budget provides \$125 million for targeted programs to assist Americans living in rural communities through the HHS Office of Rural Health Policy, which is housed within HRSA. The Office serves as the Department's primary

voice on rural health issues and funds a number of state and community-based grant and technical assistance programs to help meet the health care needs of rural communities.

HRSA also makes investments in a number of other critically important health care programs that collectively touch the lives of millions of people across the country. These include the 340B Drug Pricing Program, which provides discounts on outpatient prescription drugs to program that serve a high number of low-income patients, and efforts to support federal organ and transplantation oversight, as well as efforts to promote awareness of organ transplantation issues and increase organ donation rates.

Conclusion

In FY 2015, HRSA will continue its efforts to strengthen the safety net by expanding and enhancing primary care services, primary care health professionals, services for low-income individuals and people with serious health conditions, such as HIV/AIDS or in those in need of an organ transplant. We will continue to leverage our work on important health services for mothers and children, and targeted health professions training. HRSA will also continue to work in partnership with other federal entities, State and local governments, private organizations, and Members of Congress to strengthen access to care with the aim of improving the health of millions of Americans. Thank you again for providing me the opportunity to discuss HRSA's FY 2015 Budget with you today. I am pleased to respond to your questions.