

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2014

The Honorable Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The potential shortage of health care providers in coming years is significant and stands to impact the delivery of timely and quality care for America's patients. As these challenges increase, we must ensure that federal health care workforce programs are producing the maximum return on taxpayer investment. All federally financed health care training programs should be closely scrutinized to determine whether they are operating efficiently, aligning with specific national needs, and achieving their strategic objectives. Preparing a health system that can both meet today's demands and respond to changing dynamics in the future will not happen without rigorous and consistent oversight.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified three programs at the Department of Education (DOE) that in 2012 allocated about \$2 million for training and education of health professionals. Every federal dollar spent on these kinds of workforce programs is an opportunity to address projected shortfalls and needs in health care, both in specific professions and in certain geographic areas. At the same time, resources allocated to a misaligned program or lost due to mismanagement do not achieve the goal of training the next generation of health care professionals.

We respectfully request that you assist us in our review and oversight of federal health care workforce programs by providing the following information:

1. Please provide a comprehensive list of statutory and/or departmental strategic plans and goals for each program at DOE that funds postsecondary training or education of health professionals.
2. Please provide a comprehensive list of all metrics used to monitor the progress, outcomes, and recipients of each program, including metrics to assess whether programs are achieving their statutory objectives.
3. Please provide the funding levels for and number of professionals supported or served by each program each year for the last five years.

4. Please describe how programs determine whether to fund or approve grants for health education or training over other fields. Please include a description of metrics used to make such determinations.
5. Once a program has determined to fund or approve grants for health education or training over other fields, please describe the data and methodology used to target specific health care fields and/or geographic regions.
6. Please describe the department's procedure for coordinating programs intra-departmentally and with other federal agencies to ensure health care workforce programs are addressing unmet needs and avoiding unnecessary duplication.
7. Please list the number of full-time employees (FTEs), contract employees, or other program officers tasked by each program, delineating tasks by program and whether each such employee works in other program areas at the Department of Education.

We look forward to working with you to improve the efficiency and accountability of health care workforce training programs to ensure a sound investment aligned with our nation's health care workforce needs. Thank you in advance for providing a written response within 30 days.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator



Michael B. Enzi
U.S. Senator



Richard Burr
U.S. Senator