

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TALKING POINTS

THE CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE CRISIS

Background Information

- The US is currently experiencing a shortage of physicians who care for the critically ill, who are in the most danger of dying from an acute/critical illness.
- The demand for ICU services is projected to grow rapidly during the next 10 years, as the average acuity of hospitalized patients rises with the growth of the elderly population.
- Research has shown that optimal care is delivered by intensivists for these patients.
- Currently only one-third of these patients are cared for by intensivists. As a result, two-thirds may be receiving sub-optimal care.
- In 2003, Congress asked the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to work with the ACCP and the Critical Care Workforce Partnership (CCWP) to update critical care workforce models in order to more accurately assess the adequacy of the supply of critical care physicians. Their report was released in May 2006.
- The ACCP, along with the CCWP, worked with Senator Durbin to write and introduce in the Senate in 2007, The Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act (S. 718) with 6 co-sponsors. The companion bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (H.R. 3886) has 2 co-sponsors.
- This bill will fund research in standardization, staffing patterns, and coordinated community and regional approaches to providing critical care services.
- The legislation also will fund development of innovative approaches to critical care, through the use of telemedicine in rural inpatient critical care settings, and will seek to increase the supply of critical care physicians through National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Programs.

Talking Points

- This critical care workforce shortage is unique:
 - Congress requested that HRSA examine the adequacy of the critical care workforce.
 - HRSA did write the report and validated that this shortage exists.
 - An inadequate supply of critical care physicians impacts all acutely ill patients - it is not organ/disease specific.
 - An estimated 360,000 deaths occur each year in the ICU not managed by intensivists.

Request for Action: Become a co-sponsor of The Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act (S. 718/H.R. 3886).