

Talking Points and Background Information for the Critical Care Workforce Shortage

REQUEST FOR ACTION: Become a cosponsor of the *Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act*.

Talking Points

- This critical care workforce shortage is unique.
 - Congress requested that HRSA examine the adequacy of the critical care workforce.
 - HRSA wrote the report and validated that this shortage exists.
 - An inadequate supply of critical care physicians impacts all acutely ill patients - it is not organ or disease specific.
 - An estimated 360,000 deaths occur each year in ICUs not managed by intensivists.
- The above talking points are consistent with the ACCP Principles for Health System Reform. The health system reform legislation signed by the President in March 2010 will result in 32 million more Americans with health-care coverage, thereby exacerbating the need to address the growing critical care workforce crisis.

Background Information

- The United States is currently experiencing a shortage of physicians who care for the critically ill, those 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 severity of illness of hospitalized patients rises with the growth of the elderly population.
- Research has shown that optimal care is delivered by intensivists for ICU patients.
- Currently only one-third of ICU patients are cared for by intensivists. As a result, two-thirds of ICU patients may be receiving suboptimal 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. The HRSA report was released in May 2006.
- The CCWP is a coalition of medical organizations that collectively represents more than 100,000 health-care professionals who are specialists in critical care. It includes the ACCP, American Thoracic Society, American Association of Critical-Care Nurses, and Society of Critical Care Medicine.
- The ACCP, along with the CCWP, worked with Senators Whitehouse (D-RI) and Crapo (R-ID) to introduce *The Patient-Focused Critical Care Enhancement Act* (S 1020) in the 111th Congress. The legislation has five cosponsors. Representatives Schakowsky (D-IL-9) and Cantor (R-VA-7) introduced a companion bill in the House, HR 1581, which has eight cosponsors.
- The legislation would take an important step to improve the efficiency and retention of the critical care workforce while reducing its burnout rate by:
 - Funding the development of innovative approaches to critical care through the use of telemedicine in rural and underserved inpatient critical care settings
 - Increasing the supply of critical care physicians through National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Programs.
 - Funding research in standardization, staffing patterns, and coordinated community and regional approaches to providing critical care services.
- The legislation makes no changes to any federal entitlement programs (and thus has no “Pay-As-You-Go” scorekeeping implications under the federal budget process), but does authorize \$14 million for research and demonstrations, as well as for telemedicine initiatives.