

August 28, 2023

The Honorable Jacky Rosen  
U.S. Senate  
713 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Joyce, M.D.  
U.S. House of Representatives  
152 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
U.S. Senate  
425 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Deborah Ross  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1221 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Specialty Physicians Advancing Rural Care (SPARC) Act. (S. 705/ H.R. 2761)**

Dear Senators Rosen and Wicker and Representatives Joyce and Ross:

On behalf of the undersigned physician organizations, we offer our unwavering support for the Specialty Physicians Advancing Rural Care (SPARC) Act. (S. 705/ H.R. 2761). This bipartisan legislation establishes a new loan repayment program to incentivize specialty physicians to practice in rural areas and expand access for many Americans who do not have specialty physicians available to treat them.

The demand for specialty physicians throughout the United States continues to outpace the supply, especially in rural America. The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis projects that by 2035 there will be a 93 percent adequacy level (adequacy is the relationship between the projected future supply and projected future demand) across the country to serve patients across 35 medical specialties. However, the disparity in metro areas compared to non-metro areas is even more stark. Metro areas have a 102 percent adequacy level, while non-metro areas will have only 29 percent of the providers necessary to serve the population.<sup>1</sup> This alarming inequity demonstrates the need to incentivize specialists to practice in non-metro areas.

In addition, the average cost of medical school has resulted in graduates having an incredibly large amount of student loan debt that continues to grow each year. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the average cost of attendance for four years of medical school in 2023 is \$268,000 (public institution) and \$363,000 (private institution), which is a two percent increase from the class of 2022. In addition, over 71 percent of medical students have some amount of student loan debt, and 53 percent have \$200,000 or more. These factors make it imperative that policymakers take action to help reduce the financial burden on young physicians and incentivize them to practice in those areas of the country with the highest need.<sup>2</sup>

We look forward to working with you and the Congressional leadership to advance and pass the Specialty Physicians Advancing Rural Care (SPARC) Act. (S. 705/ H.R. 2761).

1. Health Resources & Services Administration. Workforce Projections. Accessed August 16, 2023. <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/workforce-projections>
2. Association of American Medical Colleges. Medical Student Education: Debt, Costs, and Loan Repayment Fact Card for the Class of 2022; October 2022. Accessed August 16, 2023. [https://store.aamc.org/downloadable/download/sample/sample\\_id/575/](https://store.aamc.org/downloadable/download/sample/sample_id/575/)

Sincerely,  
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American Academy of Sleep Medicine  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American College of Radiology  
American College of Rheumatology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Medical Association  
American Society for Radiation Oncology  
American Society of Reproductive Medicine  
American Urological Association  
College of Pathologists  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
Society of Interventional Radiology  
Society of Thoracic Surgeons