

April 2, 2007

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
The Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Nelson and Senator Reid:

The Endocrine Society, representing more than 14,000 physicians and scientists in the field of endocrinology, applauds your introduction of the “Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2007.”

This important piece of legislation will help to ensure that there is an adequate supply of physicians to care for the country’s aging population. Research suggests that the nation is faced with a significant shortage of physicians in practice and that demand will exceed supply from now until 2020. A study performed by The Endocrine Society, the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, and the American Diabetes Association found that, in 2003, the national supply of endocrinologists was estimated to be 12 percent lower than demand and that the number of endocrinologists entering the market had continuously fallen over the previous 5 years. The study indicated that the number of endocrinologists entering the workforce would not be sufficient to meet future demand and that steps should be taken to stop the ongoing decline in the number of endocrinologists in training.


As the nation’s population ages, the demand for endocrinologists’ services will increase. By 2020, 18.6 percent of the population will be over the age of 65, and statistics show that the incidence and prevalence of endocrine-related diseases, such as diabetes, thyroid disease, and osteoporosis, increase with age. Furthermore, the increase in the incidence of type 2 diabetes in children implies a still greater increase in the prevalence of this disease in adults. Thus, the demand for endocrinologists’ services will likely increase as the population ages.

While most specialties are predicting a shortage of physicians in the coming years, a shortage of endocrinologists may have a significant impact on health expenditures. Direct medical expenses attributed to diabetes were estimated at \$91.6 billion in 2002, while indirect expenditures resulting from lost work days, mortality, and permanent disability associated with diabetes were estimated at \$39.8 billion. Furthermore, it is estimated that there will be a 48 percent increase in incidence and economic burden of osteoporotic fractures by 2025, with total osteoporotic fractures increasing from greater than 2 million per year to greater than 3 million per year; as a result, health care costs will increase from \$16.9 billion per year to \$25.6 billion per year. Eliminating or reducing the health problems caused by diabetes and osteoporosis through factors such as better access

to preventive care, more widespread diagnosis, and more disease management could potentially reduce national expenditures for health care services and increase productivity in the U.S. economy. Without an increase in resident physician positions, patients with debilitating conditions such as these will be faced with waits of many months to see an endocrinologist, which may lead to further, more expensive complications.

Thank you, Senators Nelson and Reid, for recognizing the importance of increasing funding for graduate medical education and ensuring an adequate supply of physicians for the health care needs of the population . We fully support your efforts to increase the number of resident positions in states with a shortage of resident physicians as provided in the “Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2007.” If we can be of assistance to you in any way, please contact Stephanie Kutler of The Endocrine Society staff at [skutler@endo-society.org](mailto:skutler@endo-society.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leonard Wartofsky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Leonard Wartofsky, M.D.  
President  
The Endocrine Society