

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2002

March 25, 2004

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
United States Senate
711 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

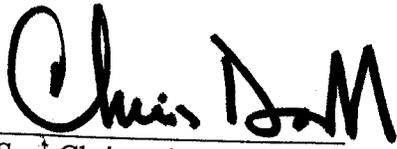
The Honorable Tom Harkin
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education
United States Senate
731 Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Specter and Harkin:

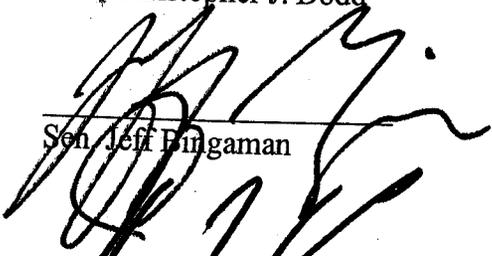
We are writing to encourage you to restore funding for Area Health Education Center (AHECs) and Health Education Training Centers (HETCs) to the FY 2003 levels of \$33.1 million and \$4.3 million respectively. The President's proposed budget for FY 2005 provides zero funding for AHECs and HETCs, and in FY 2004 these programs experienced significant funding cuts—11.9 percent below FY 2003. These cuts endanger the ability of 46 states – in which AHECs and HETCs currently operate – to continue receiving the benefits of AHECs and HETCs services. These cuts also hamper States' abilities to address the shortage of qualified and willing health professionals available to care for the Nation's under-served populations.

AHECs and HETCs provide a critical service by forming linkages between health care delivery systems and educational resources in underserved communities; creating collaborative community-based education and training opportunities for health professionals, students, and primary care residents; increasing the number of individuals from minority and underserved communities who enter health careers; supporting multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary training in response to community needs; and creating systems for learning and networks for information dissemination. AHECs respond to needs for training of health professionals in specialized programs and provide front-line health care services to underserved populations.

The training and health care services these programs provide would not be possible without Federal support. We urge you to make AHEC and HETC funding a priority in the FY 2005 appropriations process by fully restoring funding to the FY 2003 levels of \$33.1 million and \$4.3 million. Your support of our efforts to meet the needs of our Nation's underserved population is greatly appreciated.



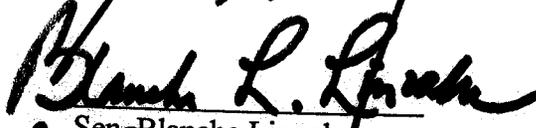
Sen. Christopher J. Dodd



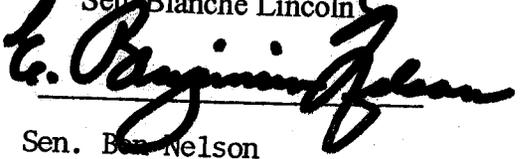
Sen. Jeff Bingaman



Sen. John Kerry

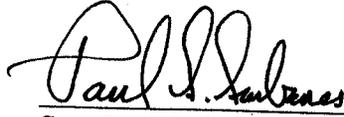


Sen. Blanche Lincoln



Sen. Ben Nelson

Sincerely,



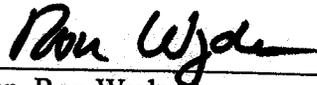
Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes



Sen. James M. Jeffords



Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman



Sen. Ron Wyden