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Title: Certification of Medical School Graduates as Physician’s Assistants

Introduced by: Anthony Adeleye, MD

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Referred to: Reference Committee B

House Action: **REFER**

Whereas, the funding for graduate medical education (GME) was frozen at 1996 levels by a legislation passed in the U.S. Congress in 1997, and

Whereas, other legislation that was passed in subsequent years to cut Medicare funds to balance the federal budget slashed postgraduate residency funding and positions¹, and

Whereas, medical schools’ student enrollment increased yearly, and new medical schools were opened, all to avert future shortage of medical doctors, thus producing more graduates¹, and

Whereas, the total number of medical school graduates has increased far and above the 1996 levels, yet federal funding of GME has remained fixed, leading to a mismatch between available medical residency positions and medical graduates¹, and

Whereas, this has resulted in many qualified medical graduates being locked out of the profession they had gone to medical school for, without residency, and

Whereas, the state of Michigan was projected to produce more medical graduates in 2015² than there were available residency training positions/slots, a prerequisite to full licensure, as a physician³, and

Whereas, to be fully licensed as a physician, a graduate must undergo either a one year postgraduate medical internship or a varied period of clinical residency depending on specialty area³, and

Whereas, foreign trained physicians currently make-up 25 percent of all licensed physicians in the U.S.¹, and

Whereas, foreign medical graduates (FMG) are especially impacted by the reduced availability of residency positions¹ because program directors now consider U.S. medical graduates, first, before FMGs, and at the end of each annual national residency matching cycle, more FMGs are effectively locked out, this is sad and unfortunate, as FMGs have student debts and families to feed like everyone else, and

47 Whereas, one way to improve health care access is to increase the number of licensed
48 physicians, by increasing the number of residency positions through increased GME funding⁴,
49 and

51 Whereas, unfortunately, this has not happened because the federal government has
52 continued to cut Medicare funds⁵, and

54 Whereas, another way to improve health care access is to expand or increase the
55 number of mid-level health care providers like physician's assistants^{4,5}, and

57 Whereas, legislation was introduced in New York in 2013 to allow foreign medical
58 graduates to be licensed as physician's assistants after a period of internship, so as to work in
59 medically underserved communities⁶, and

61 Whereas, the state of Michigan acknowledges the needs outlined above and has
62 initiated programs to address them such as Mi-Docs and the Michigan State Loan Repayment
63 Program (Essential Health Provider program)⁷; unfortunately, FMGs are not beneficiaries of
64 these programs, and

66 Whereas, in 2015, the Physician Assistant Council for Medical Graduates, Inc. (a.k.a.,
67 Assistant Physician Certification Council for Medical Graduates or APCCFMG), a nonprofit
68 organization incorporated in the State of Michigan in 2012, sent a letter of introduction and
69 appeal for support to the Governor of the state of Michigan calling for an amendment of the
70 Michigan Public Health Code to recognize medical school graduates as physician's assistants
71 after completion of a six-month clinical internship and training under licensed physicians in
72 hospitals, medical clinics, etc., and under close monitoring and supervision by APCCFMG, and

74 Whereas, that letter was endorsed by 50 Michigan licensed physicians, and

76 Whereas, under the APCCFMG's proposal, such medical school graduates upon
77 completion of the six-month internship shall receive certification after obtaining a passing
78 grade on a state of Michigan sanctioned Physician's Assistant Certification examination to be
79 conducted by APCCFMG, prior to licensing, and

81 Whereas, it is the lack of funds that led to the present shortage of medical residency
82 slots, and

84 Whereas, this proposed licensing pathway to retrain FMGs as physician's assistants
85 would also require funds; however, APCCFMG proposes to assist the selected candidates in
86 securing loans, akin to student loans, so they can pay for the six-month clinical internship costs,
87 insurance, certification examination fees, licensing fees, etc., and

89 Whereas, the Governor's office and some Michigan Legislators welcomed APCCFMG's
90 vision to improve health care access through the proposed amendment, but referred the
91 APCCFMG to seek support, endorsement and partnership from MSMS, and

92 Whereas, the APCCFMG also sent a letter in 2015 to MSMS' President seeking support
93 and partnership for the APCCFMG's proposed amendment to Michigan Public Health Code to
94 include medical school graduates in the eligibility criteria for licensing as a physician's assistant
95 in the state of Michigan, and
96

97 Whereas, the APCCFMG proposes that this category of physician's assistant, after
98 licensing, be allowed to join MSMS, pay MSMS membership dues at the same level as clinical
99 residents, and benefit from medical update seminars, conferences, continuing medical
100 education opportunities, etc., since they are unlicensed physicians, and
101

102 Whereas, APCCFMG would like this category of physician's assistant to be called
103 "Physician's Assistant - Assistant Physician Certified" or for short "PA-APC" to make a distinction
104 between the current Physician's Assistants that are called "Physician's Assistant certified" or
105 "PA-C" that are graduates of physician's assistants programs, and
106

107 Whereas, politicians will continue to pass laws to address health care issues based on
108 economics, and some legislation could erode the physician's role as the lead in matters of
109 health if politicians sense that the American Medical Association and MSMS, being the flagship
110 organizations in health matters, are not proffering solutions to help ameliorate these issues,
111 and
112

113 Whereas, adopting the APCCFMG's proposal would demonstrate an outright willingness
114 by MSMS to assist in lowering health care costs and improve health care access, and
115

116 Whereas, all could identify a need/problem, but if no one acts to offer suggestions or
117 acts to ameliorate, or remedy the severity of a problem, when they are in the best position to
118 do so, then others without the same knowledge as physicians, but in positions of power and
119 authority, would be compelled by economics, health care needs or shortage of physicians or
120 glut of medical school graduates to promulgate laws that shall erode our core professional
121 principles, autonomy and training such as the case of Missouri legislation that grants
122 independent practice to 30-days trained assistant physicians, and
123

124 Whereas, should MSMS adopt this vision, the APCCFMG shall reach out to the state of
125 Missouri to amend its Assistant Physician law to line it up with the spirit of this resolution, so as
126 to address some concerns already raised; therefore be it
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128 RESOLVED: That MSMS partner with the Physician Assistant Certification Council for
129 Medical Graduates, Inc. (PACFMG), and the state of Michigan to sponsor legislation in both
130 Legislative Chambers to amend Michigan's Public Health Code to recognize medical school
131 graduates in the eligibility criteria for issuance of a physician's assistant license upon
132 completion of a six-month clinical internship and obtaining a passing score on a Michigan
133 sanctioned physician's assistant licensing examination to be conducted by the PACFMG; and be
134 it further
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136 RESOLVED: That, should Michigan's law be amended to allow for a process by which
137 medical school graduates can successfully obtain licensure in Michigan as physician's assistants,
138 MSMS will permit this category of physician's assistants to join MSMS, pay MSMS membership

139 dues at the same level as clinical residents, and benefit from medical update seminars,
140 conferences, continuing medical education opportunities, etc.; and be it further

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142 RESOLVED: That, should the Physician Assistant Certification Council for Medical
143 Graduates' (PACFMG) proposal to allow for the licensure of medical students as physician's
144 assistants in Michigan be adopted with the PACFMG being given the responsibility of training,
145 supervision, and conduction examinations, MSMS shall do the following:

- 146 1. Accredite the PACFMG physician's assistant certification examination and receive 30
147 percent of the accreditation fees, 10 percent of the clinical internship fees, and five
148 percent of the certification fees that each successful candidate shall pay to undergo
149 this alternate postgraduate pathway, and
- 150 2. Accredite the six-month clinical internship training being supervised by the PACFMG
151 at different time intervals to ensure quality training; and be it further

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153 RESOLVED: That MSMS shall collaborate with the Physician Assistant Certification
154 Council for Medical Graduates, Inc. to refer this new alternate postgraduate pathway to the
155 American Medical Association for its endorsement nationally and as a possible introduction to
156 the U.S. Congress and the U.S. President for the introduction and enactment of federal
157 legislation.

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160 WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE: This request would require MSMS to engage
161 with a consulting firm with expertise in this area. Estimates range from \$100,000 – \$125,000.

¹ Beck, Melinda. "Squeeze looms for Doctors." The Wall Street Journal. Updated March 14, 2013 10:36 a.m. ET
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324096404578356544137516914> Accessed March 1st, 2016.

² French, Ron. "Michigan gets med school boom-doctor bust." Bridgemi. The Center of Michigan. 12 June 2012.
<http://bridgemi.com/2012/06/michigan-gets-med-school-boom-doctor-bust/> Accessed March 1st, 2016.

³ AMA Licensure 2016. <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/becoming-physician/medical-licensure.page> Accessed March 1st, 2016.

⁴ Mann, Sarah. "Proposed Federal Budget Cuts GME, Freezes NIH Funding." Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Report
newsletter of March 2012. <http://gme.med.ufl.edu/files/2012/04/Proposed-Federal-Budget-Cuts-GME.pdf> Accessed February 29, 2016.

⁵ Kliff, Sarah. "One more thing for premed students to freak out about." The Washington Post. February 15, 2013.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/02/15/one-more-thing-for-preme-students-to-freak-out-about/> Accessed February
29, 2016.

⁶ New York State Legislation that grants Foreign medical graduates Physician's Assistant designation after a period of Clinical internship.
<http://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2013/S2219A> Accessed February 29, 2016.

⁷ Michigan Department of Community Health. "Where are Michigan's Designated shortage areas?" http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71551_2945_47514-176079--,00.html Accessed March 27, 2016.