



April 9, 2009

Senator Max Baucus
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Baucus:

As Executive Vice President and CEO of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), I am writing to urge you to include the restoration of funding for specialized pharmacy residency programs as you begin to draft health care reform legislation. These postgraduate year-two programs provide critical training for clinical pharmacists to function as a member of the multidisciplinary care team, which ultimately results in higher quality care for the patients they serve. ASHP is the 35,000 member organization that represents pharmacists who practice in hospitals and health-systems.

As health care reform legislation moves forward, ensuring an adequate supply of well-trained health professionals must be a key component. Without it, issues relating to coverage and access to the system itself are moot. Our request is simple: we seek to restore the funding for postgraduate year-two pharmacy residency programs. We believe a funding level of \$10 to \$15 million nationwide is sufficient to ensure these programs continue and grow to meet the needs of patient care in the 21st century. Look no further than the Veterans Administration and Department of Defense, as they recognize the value of these programs by continuing to fund second-year residency training. Moreover, in a study published by the *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, an intensive care unit clinical pharmacist saved a hospital as much as \$280,000 over a 4.5-month period by preventing potential adverse drug events. The pharmacist, who completed both a general residency and a specialized residency in critical care pharmacy practice, conducted patient care rounds and chart reviews.

In 2004, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) cut funding claiming these programs were not a requirement for employment as a clinical pharmacist. ASHP survey data contradict that notion but nevertheless, CMS indicated that completion of a second-year residency was not the industry norm. CMS defined "industry norm" to be at least 50% of hospitals requiring second-year residencies as a condition of employment. ASHP would take it a step further and argue that all pharmacists serving a clinical role in a hospital should have this training. However, we won't reach our goal without restoring the funding for these programs, which is why I am contacting you.

Our economy is weathering a difficult storm, and budgets are tight. If there is concern among members of Congress that funding should reflect accountability to the public good, we agree. My staff stands ready to work with you on a plan to temporarily restore the funding for these programs for a specified period of time, and report back on whether the industry norm as outlined by CMS in 2004 was met. I believe this plan would help us reach our goal as well as address concerns over fiscal responsibility. But I need your help, and that's why I respectfully urge you to restore funding for these critical programs as you begin drafting health care reform legislation.

Sincerely,

Henri R. Manasse, Jr., Ph.D., Sc.D.
Executive Vice President and CEO

TOGETHER WE MAKE A GREAT TEAM