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For Immediate Release

## Florida's Graduate Medical Programs Successfully Reducing Physician Shortages, but Some Areas Falling Further Behind

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (Dec. 13, 2017) – Florida's top teaching and safety net hospitals today released their second annual report on graduate medical education which cautions that while significant overall progress has been made in reducing Florida's doctor shortage, the crisis continues in a few physician specialties and regions of the state.

The report, *Training Tomorrow's Doctors: Graduate Medical Education in Florida 2017 Annual Report*, provides a comprehensive overview of Florida's graduate medical education infrastructure and its ability to meet Florida's future physician workforce needs. Produced by the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida in partnership with the Teaching Hospital Council of Florida, the report utilizes state-of-the-art metrics to annually measure teaching hospitals' progress in addressing Florida's physician shortage identified in the landmark 2015 study forecasting physician supply and demand.

The report finds much good news for Floridians. Before Florida policymakers started emphasizing GME in 2013, there were estimated 3,896 residency slots. Since then, Florida has funded an additional 1,113 slots for a total of 5,009 full-time equivalent slots, a laudable 29 percent increase.

Florida is also now leading the nation in keeping its newly trained doctors in the state to practice. The newly released 2017 Data Book by the Association of American Medical College reports that Florida has the fourth best physician retention rate in the country.

However, significant challenges remain. The report reveals that despite the overall growth in GME programs, Florida has lost residency slots in four specialty areas facing shortages: urology, thoracic surgery, nephrology and ophthalmology. Medicaid Region 8, which covers Collier, Lee and Sarasota counties in Southwest Florida, is identified as facing a severe shortage of primary care physicians.

"Florida's commitment to graduate medical education continues to positively impact our efforts to train Florida's next generation of doctors," said Steve Sonenreich, president and CEO of Mount Sinai Medical Center and chair of the Teaching Hospital Council of Florida. "This latest report underscores not just the progress we're making, but the need to make sure policy and funding remains strategically targeted so we can maintain momentum while ensuring we don't fall further behind in any area."

Teaching Hospitals

Broward Health

Jackson Health System

Mount Sinai  
Medical Center

Orlando Health

UF Health Shands Hospital

UF Health Jacksonville

Tampa General Hospital

Public Hospitals

Halifax Health

Lee Health

Memorial Healthcare System

Sarasota Memorial  
Health Care System

Children's Hospitals

Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital

Nicklaus Children's Hospital

Anthony Carvalho

President

Central to the Safety Nets' plans to extend their successful efforts in addressing the doctor shortages is their request for additional funding in the state's 2018-19 budget, including:

- **\$2 million for Medicaid regions where the supply of primary care physicians falls short of demand by more than 25 percent.** This funding would provide Southwest Florida hospitals a \$100,000 bonus per GME resident in primary care in addition to any other GME funding.
- **\$5 million to incentivize and retain GME slots in the four specialty areas in decline.** While Mount Sinai Medical Center and Tampa General Hospital have already stepped forward and are adding new residency slots in those areas, more encouragement is needed in those specialties to ensure other hospitals follow their lead.
- **\$50 million to help Florida's 13 statutorily designated teaching hospitals offset financial losses associated with providing charity care.** Last year, Florida's charity care offset program, the Low Income Pool, only covered \$208.8 million of the \$578.4 million in charity care provided by statutory teaching hospitals.

"We can't stop here. We must continue to pay close attention to areas with the greatest needs," said David Verinder, president and CEO of Sarasota Memorial Health Care System and a member of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida Board of Directors. "The investments we make today will have a lasting impact on our ability to meet Florida's burgeoning health care needs for years to come."

At the heart of the state's efforts to address Florida's physician shortage is the Statewide Medicaid Residency Program (MRP), which Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature created in 2013 with \$80 million in recurring state and federal match funding. Since then, the number of participating hospitals has increased by 44 percent, to 62 hospitals. Of those, 54 hospitals have residency programs in specialties facing shortages.

While the MRP has successfully increased the number of residency slots, it has done little to ensure that all areas of the state will have enough of the right type of doctors. In order to accurately document that need, the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida and Teaching Hospital Council of Florida commissioned IHS Markit to undertake an unprecedented assessment of current and future physician workforce supply and demand.

The resulting 2015 study, *Florida Physician Workforce Analysis: Forecasting Supply and Demand*, found Florida faced a shortage of nearly 7,000 physicians through 2025. Those shortages spanned every Medicaid region of the state and covered 20 specialties, including psychiatry, family medicine, urology, and nephrology. Data also revealed that one area of the state, Medicaid Region 8 in Southwest Florida, faced a severe primary care shortage with deficits in internal medicine and family practice physicians.

Those findings prompted the 2015 Legislature to build upon the MRP by appropriating an additional \$100 million in local and federal match funding to create the Graduate Medical Education Startup Bonus and Retention Programs. The programs pay hospitals a one-time \$100,000 startup bonus for every residency slot created in a shortage specialty, and any remaining annual funding is directed to hospitals that have residents in the shortage areas as retention incentives.

Already, the GME Startup Bonus program has proven a resounding success. This year, the program resulted in the creation of 313 new residency positions in many of the 20 physician specialties in deficit. That was up from 66 during the first year. A total of 750 newly filled and newly created slots are now in place training tomorrow's physicians in specialties known to be in deficit supply.

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*The Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida is a 14-member coalition of teaching, public, children's and regional perinatal intensive care hospitals that together make up only 10 percent of the state's hospitals, yet provide the majority of the state's highly specialized medical care, train tomorrow's doctors, and provide almost half of the Medicaid and charity care.*