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TEACHING, SAFETY NET HOSPITALS APPLAUD FUNDING REQUESTS FOR GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION IN SENATE, HOUSE BUDGET PLANS

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., March 25, 2015 – Teaching and safety net hospitals applaud Florida’s Senate and House leaders for recognizing the importance of graduate medical education by including in their budget proposals funding for new residency slots in specialty fields facing severe shortages.

The Teaching Hospital Council of Florida and the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida have requested \$20 million in recurring state funds during the 2015 legislative session to create new medical residency programs and training slots in high-demand fields. The funds would be eligible for an additional \$30 million in federal matching funds, bringing the total amount of new funding for graduate medical education to \$50 million a year.

“We are encouraged that both the Senate and House budget proposals reflect the need for additional graduate medical education,” said Steven Sonenreich, chairman of the Teaching Hospital Council of Florida and president and chief executive officer of Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami. “This is a positive step toward addressing the state’s projected physician shortage in the next decade and we thank the Senate and House leadership, and their healthcare appropriations chairmen, for giving the issue the attention it deserves.”

Inclusion in the budget proposals follows the Teaching Hospital Council and Safety Net Hospital Alliance’s release of a groundbreaking IHS Global study that found Florida will face a shortage of about 7,000 physician specialists in the next 10 years. The shortfall will affect regions statewide and extend to various specialties, such as psychiatry, general surgery, rheumatology and thoracic surgery. The study also revealed that the best way to increase the number of physicians practicing in Florida is to expand the number of graduate medical education residency slots, given that 81 percent of the doctors who complete their residency training in Florida stay here. Unfortunately, Florida does not have enough residency slots for its medical school graduates, resulting in two out of three graduates leaving for residency programs in other states.

Teaching and safety net hospital officials praised Sen. Rene Garcia of Miami and Speaker Pro Tempore Matt Hudson of Naples for working diligently on finding solutions for addressing the shortage and are hopeful that the “placeholder” amounts - \$1.5 million in House and \$500,000 in the Senate, plus federal matching funds – will be increased once Senate and House negotiators start the budget conference process in late April. Garcia is chairman of the Senate Health & Human Services Appropriations Committee; Hudson is chairman of the House Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee. Hospital officials also urged House lawmakers to adopt language in the Senate bill that creates a GME start-up bonus program giving hospitals a one-time \$100,000 bonus for every new residency slot in identified shortage specialties.

(more)

- Teaching Hospitals Broward Health Jackson Health Mount Sinai Medical Center Orlando Health UF Health Shands Hospital UF Health Jacksonville Tampa General Hospital
- Public Hospitals Halifax Health Lee Memorial Health System Memorial Healthcare System Sarasota Memorial Health Care System
- Children’s Hospitals All Children’s Hospital Miami Children’s Hospital
- Regional Perinatal Intensive Care Center Sacred Heart Health System



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The Legislature’s commitment to graduate medical education coincides with Gov. Rick Scott’s ongoing efforts to close the gap between physician supply and demand. In 2013, the governor proposed allocating \$80 million in recurring state and federal funds for a new Medicaid medical residency program, which the Legislature approved. Gov. Scott is proposing to increase GME funding by an additional \$7.5 million annually.

“Florida’s leaders clearly recognize the importance of training more doctors to meet the growing health care needs of our citizens,” said Carlos Migoya, president and CEO of Jackson Health System and board chairman of the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida. “We sincerely look forward to working with the Senate and House leadership as they finalize the state budget for the coming year.”

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The Teaching Hospital Council of Florida represents the state’s leading teaching hospitals: Broward Health, Jackson Health System, Mount Sinai Medical Center, Orlando Health, UF Health Shands Hospital, UF Health Jacksonville and Tampa General Hospital. All are part of the 14-member Safety Net Hospital Alliance, a coalition of teaching, public, children’s and regional perinatal intensive care hospitals that provide highly specialized medical care and train tomorrow’s doctors. Last year, the Safety Net hospitals trained 3,646 medical residents in 292 accredited programs statewide, accounting for 72 percent of Florida’s graduate medical education programs.

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