

To members of the House Health Care Committee:

I am writing in regards to the proposed funding cuts to AHEC, which I strongly oppose.

As a family medicine physician who completed residency training in Vermont, AHEC programs encouraged me to remain in the state after training. AHEC's Physician Placement Professional was key for navigating positions that could be well suited for my skills and goals. The loan repayment program incentivized staying in Vermont. I have now been serving our VT patients for nearly 13 years but know that I would have moved elsewhere if not for the loan repayment program.

While AHEC has been important to my personal career journey, I have also seen it's broader impact on recruiting and maintaining a primary care physician workforce. As the current Program Director for the University of Vermont Family Medicine Residency Program, I mentor numerous resident physicians regarding their career goals. I am proud that over half of our graduates go on to practice in Vermont communities. Speaking with my residents, it is evident that AHEC resources routinely make a difference when residents are deciding next steps in their careers.

AHEC programs have been essential in recruiting and retaining my Family Medicine colleagues within the state. Our residency program currently has two Vermont AHEC Scholars who will work within the state after graduation as part of that program. Additionally, several recent graduates identify AHEC's Loan Repayment Program as a key part of their decisions to work in Vermont – especially in rural portions of the state, where primary care gaps are the most pressing. At a time when providing rural primary care has become increasingly challenging for physicians and other healthcare providers, these AHEC pipeline programs have truly improved the healthcare landscape of our state.

In my humble professional opinion, funding cuts to AHEC would have wide reaching and long lasting impacts on our primary care workforce – and ultimately on the health of our state's citizens. I strongly encourage the House Health Care Committee to reconsider recommendations around the AHEC funding cuts.

Sincerely,

Gordon Powers, MD

Associate Professor, UVM Department of Family Medicine
Program Director, UVM Family Medicine Residency Program
(802) 847-8547 (Residency)
(802) 847-4322 (Clinic)