Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

October 16, 2026

The Honorable Mehmet Oz, M.D.
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator Oz,

We write in support of UnityPoint Health's application for an additional 3.0 full-time equivalent Medicare-funded graduate medical education (GME) residency positions for its accredited emergency medicine residency program in Des Moines, Iowa. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has the responsibility to award these new medical residency positions.[1] We are grateful to CMS's leadership in awarding these residency positions and ensuring these resources go to rural health care. We want to share how these new medical residency positions will benefit Iowa.

We consistently hear about the shortage of doctors as we travel across Iowa. To address this nationwide workforce challenge, Congress[2] funded 1,000 additional Medicare-funded GME residency positions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) of 2021. This was the largest increase in Medicare-funded residency slots in over 25 years. The additional 1,000 residency slots were intended to help meet the needs of the health care workforce, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Iowa Methodist Medical Center and Blank Children's Hospital within UnityPoint Health established[3] this new emergency medicine residency program in Des Moines, Iowa, as the result of federal Medicare GME funding, UnityPoint Health Foundation support, and a long-standing commitment to improve emergency medicine training by its staff. Since CMS began distributing these new medical residency positions, UnityPoint Health has been awarded 8.42 direct GME

[1] Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), "Direct Graduate Medical Education (DGME)," https://www.cms.gov/medicare/payment/prospective-payment-systems/acute-inpatient-pps/direct-graduate-medical-education-dgme.
[2] This funding provision was included in the Senate Finance Committee Title under Section 126 in the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) of 2021 as the result of Senator Grassley's leadership as then-Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance; U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, "Medicare, Medicaid and Human Services Policy Extension," December 21, 2020, https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Health,%2012-21-20,%20Section%20by%20section%20Medicare,%20Medicaid,%20Human%20Services%20policy%20extensions.pdf.
[3] UnityPoint Health, "Emergency Medicine Residency Program - Iowa Methodist Medical Center," https://www.unitypoint.org/join-our-team/medical-education-and-career-growth/emergency-medicine-residency-des-moines-area-hospitals.

funding.[4] Today, the program has 18 residents. Additional federal support will allow the program to grow. Residents not only get experience in emergency medicine, but the co-location of Blank Children's Hospital in this program gives medical residents experience with pediatric emergency medicine. Residents have integrated themselves into the Des Moines and nearby communities by serving as on-call physicians at sporting and concert events. Residents even serve in local emergency medical service operations to get additional experience. While the residency program is based in Des Moines, Iowa, residents in Iowa's small towns are benefiting as well. As part of the residency program, residents get clinical experience more than 50 miles away at Grinnell Regional Medical Center[5] in Poweshiek County, a county with a population of less than 20,000 people.[6] We are proud to say that a majority of the first class of residents in this new program will continue to practice in rural and/or Iowa communities after they complete their residency.

As CMS finalizes its next round of Medicare GME awards for these new medical residency positions, we believe UnityPoint Health's application should receive full and fair consideration. This new emergency medicine residency program deserves additional federal support to strengthen rural emergency medical care and Iowa's physician workforce needs. More doctors being trained in rural America is good for patients and our nation's health care system. We look forward to continuing to work with you to address our nation's medical workforce needs and to continue this progress for rural health care.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

Zach Nunn
Member of Congress

Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress

[4] Office of Charles E. Grassley, "More Medical Residency Positions Headed to Iowa Thanks to Grassley Law," December 19, 2025, https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/more-medical-residency-positions-headed-to-iowa-thanks-to-grassley-law.
[5] UnityPoint Health, "Curriculum Structure – Second Year, Emergency Medicine Residency Program - Iowa Methodist Medical Center," https://www.unitypoint.org/join-our-team/medical-education-and-career-growth/emergency-medicine-residency-des-moines-area-hospitals.
[6] U.S. Census Bureau, "QuickFacts - Poweshiek County, Iowa," https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/poweshiekcountyiowa/.