

## **AAFP CEO Testifies Before Congress**

On behalf of American Academy of Family Physicians' 129,600 physician and student members, Executive Vice President and CEO Shawn Martin testified before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee on June 8, about the ways in which accelerating healthcare consolidation can harm primary care practices and patients in terms of access, quality, and costs.

Today 73% percent of all AAFP members and 91% of new family physicians are employed—an increase from just 59% of members in 2011.

His remarks focused on:

- The principal factors and policy decisions that have led to the increasingly consolidated market of primary care practices
- The urgent need to reform fee-for-service payment, which has chronically underinvested in and undervalued primary care
- How well-designed, sustainable value-based payment models can support practices of all sizes in providing continuous, comprehensive, and coordinated primary care
- Opportunities for Congress to address misaligned incentives that reward consolidation and allow primary care to be leveraged to maximize profits rather than patient care

“For family physicians, choosing independent practice or employment by a health plan or health system should be just that—a choice. Unfortunately, our current system rewards consolidation through misaligned financial incentives and undermines community-based primary care. This means many primary care physicians become employed by a health plan or health system not because they want to, but because it feels like their only option.”

Mr. Martin called on Congress to consider graduate medical education program reforms and increased funding for existing loan forgiveness programs, such as the National Health Service Corps, for primary care physicians who chose to join independent practices in rural and other underserved areas.

He also pressed for legislative solutions to address unsustainable fee-for-service payment rates

for physicians which are hurting physician practices, slowing the adoption of value-based payment models, accelerating consolidation, and jeopardizing patients' access to care. Among his calls to action are for Congress to pass legislation to provide an annual update to the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule based on the Medicare Economic Index, and to permanently raise Medicaid payments for primary care services to at least Medicare levels.

Mr. Martin also explained how fee-for-service medicine undervalues primary care and jeopardizes many community-based primary care practices. He urged Congress to take necessary steps for transitioning to value-based care by providing the Center for Medicare & Medication Innovation with additional authority and funding support independent primary care practices.

[Click here](#) to read Mr. Martin's testimony in its entirety.