March 15, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
  Human Services, Education
  and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
  Human Services, Education
  and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
  Human Services, Education
  and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
  Human Services, Education
  and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

The Tricare for Kids Coalition, a stakeholder group of children's health care advocacy and professional organizations, disability advocacy groups, military and veterans' service organizations and military families, is committed to ensuring that the military health system meets the unique health needs of the more than two million children covered by Tricare. Because its success is integrally tied to the ability of the military health system to serve the children and families in its care, the Coalition would like to express our continued support for the Children's Hospitals Graduate Medical Education (CHGME) program and request that Congress fund this program in the amount of $300 million for Fiscal Year 2017.

As you know, the military health care system provides care for children and families through both its own facilities and providers, and in the community. In order to provide the necessary care, the system relies heavily on pediatric residency programs. Medical education programs at children's hospitals around the country train the pediatricians and pediatric specialists that provide care for all children, including the children of military families.

In a recent Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on military health care, Dr. Jonathan Woodson, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, emphasized to the Committee the importance of Graduate Medical Education to the ability of the military health system to achieve its missions of military medical readiness and provision of care to service members and their families. The Coalition firmly agrees and would like to highlight the military's relationship with pediatric training programs in our nation's children's hospitals as an excellent example of military and civilian community partnership.

Across the country, many military medical education training programs team with children's hospitals to provide rotations and training for hundreds of in-house military physicians in pediatric and pediatric specialty care. A robust example of this partnership exists here in the nation's capital with Children's National Medical Center, which provides pediatric general and specialty training for almost 150 active duty physicians at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Similarly, Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego provides pediatric training rotations for Naval Medical Center San Diego in more than 15 pediatric specialties. CHGME is vital to these partnerships and many efforts across the country.

Today, the hospitals that receive CHGME, only one percent of all hospitals, train over 6,000 residents annually and 49% of all pediatric residents in the country, including 45% of general pediatricians and 51% of pediatric specialists. The military health system relies heavily on these pediatricians and pediatric specialists trained in CHGME-supported facilities to ensure access for children of military families. Without a stable and equitable long-term commitment to pediatric training through CHGME, military families' access to care for their children, particularly specialty care, could be jeopardized.

We urge you to preserve and strengthen the CHGME program and its investment in children's health care as a means of protecting access to primary care and pediatric specialty care for our nation's military families.

Sincerely,

Tricare for Kids Coalition