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June 4, 2020

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney  
United States House of Representatives  
2308 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Maloney,

Members of the Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM), a national medical society of 3,500 general internists, are on the front lines of providing care to patients suffering with COVID-19. On behalf of all the physicians serving on the front lines, including medical students, medical residents and fellows, SGIM is writing to voice our strong support for H.R. 6720, the "Student Loan Forgiveness for Frontline Health Workers Act," and to urge the House of Representatives and the Senate to pass this legislation. Physicians are keeping our health systems afloat during this pandemic and should be meaningfully supported for the unprecedented risks they are taking daily to treat extremely ill patients with COVID-19, with recommended personal protective equipment in short supply.

For most medical professionals including medical students, residents and fellows, student loan debt continues to be a significant concern and source of anxiety. In 2018, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges, 76 percent of students graduate with a median debt at \$200,000. The debt and the anticipation of repayment for that debt can influence a medical student or resident's choice of which medical specialty to pursue, type of practice and geographic locale rural vs urban vs suburban. Looking ahead to the aftermath of this COVID-19 pandemic and considering our needed healthcare workforce, many physicians including primary care physicians and those willing to work in medically underserved and rural areas will be high in demand. Supporting physicians, medical students, and residents, through some form of full or partial loan forgiveness makes it easier for our physicians in training to choose to work in highly needed areas.

Physicians on the front lines are risking their health and their lives to serve our patients. They are worried about the increased risk of infecting their families and even becoming ill themselves and a burden to their families. They should not have to worry about their financial security as well. Let us take care of the physicians who are taking care of us.

Therefore, we urge the House of Representatives and Senate to pass H.R. 6720, the "Student Loan Forgiveness for Frontline Health Workers Act," which will provide meaningful support our physicians, including those still in training, on the frontlines of this battle with COVID-19.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean S Kutner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jean S Kutner, MD, MSPH  
President, Society of General Internal Medicine

cc: Chairman Richard Neal, Committee on Ways & Means  
Ranking Member Kevin Brady, Committee on Ways & Means  
Chairman Bobby Scott, Committee on Education & Labor  
Ranking Member Virginia Foxx, Committee on Education & Labor  
Chairwoman Maxine Waters, Committee on Financial Services  
Ranking Member Patrick McHenry, Committee on Financial Services