February 5, 2019

The Honorable Susan Collins The Honorable Bob Casey

413 Dirksen Senate Office Building 393 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Collins and Casey:

LeadingAge strongly supports S. 299, the Geriatric Workforce Improvement Act, which you have introduced to ensure sufficient numbers of people trained and qualified to care for the growing population of older people.

LeadingAge is a tax-exempt charitable organization focused on education, advocacy and applied research. The mission of LeadingAge is to be the trusted voice for aging. Our 6,000+ not-for-profit members include the entire field of aging services - nursing homes, home care providers, affordable housing, retirement communities and assisted living. Quality the public can trust is the fundamental mission of LeadingAge and its members, many of which have served their communities for over 100 years.

The United States has a significant shortage of, and a growing demand for, qualified workers who are capable of managing, supervising and providing high-quality services and supports for older adults. The population of adults age 65 and older will increase from nearly 50 million in 2015 to 88 million in 2050 – an 84% increase. It is essential for care providers throughout the health care field and family members who provide three-quarters of long-term care services on an informal, unpaid basis, to be educated and trained in meeting the special needs of people as they age.

Your legislation would help to meet this workforce challenge by reauthorizing the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program for five years at $45 million per year. This program funds training for health care professionals to integrate geriatrics with primary care, ensuring that physicians, nurses, and other providers have the training and expertise they need to serve their older patients. The increased funding authorized under S. 299 would allow more areas of the country to benefit from these grants.

We also are pleased that your bill would revive the Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACA) program, which funds training for clinician educators. As the baby boom generation reaches retirement age, there is a growing scarcity of professionals who can educate and train the health care professionals who will care for older people in the coming decades. The GACA program is critically needed to help us meet this workforce challenge.

LeadingAge applauds the leadership you have taken on this issue and is ready to work with you in gaining support for the bill and its passage by the Senate.

Sincerely,



Katie Smith Sloan

President & CEO

LeadingAge