

Statement

RE: ProMedica Toledo Hospital Family Medicine Residency Should Not be Closed When We Have Shortage of Primary Care Physicians in Ohio

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It is most disturbing to hear that ProMedica plans to close its family medicine residency program at Toledo Hospital at a time when we have a shortage of primary care physicians in Ohio.

According to the Robert Graham Center for Policy Studies, Ohio will need an additional 681 primary care physicians by 2030 based upon changes in the number and age of the population of Ohio.

We know without a shadow of a doubt that a strong primary care-based health system leads to better health, better care, and lower costs. Evidence shows that access to primary care helps people lead longer, healthier lives. In areas of the country where there are more primary care physicians per person, death rates for cancer, heart disease, and stroke are lower and people are less likely to be hospitalized. Adults in the United States who have a primary care physician have 33% lower health care costs.

ProMedica's claim that the decision was based on national trends shifting family medicine residency programs from large, tertiary care medical centers to community hospital settings seems disingenuous given their decision just over two years ago to close the family medicine residency at Flower Hospital, which is a smaller community hospital.

Granted residency slots for primary care don't generate the money that subspecialty residency slots generate. Therefore, subspecialty residency slots are favored. Nevertheless, we should be producing the types of physicians that meet population health needs, not the ones that are going to make the most money for the hospital system.

The bottom line—patients who have access to primary care experience better health and receive better care at lower costs. It makes no sense to close a family medicine residency program when we have a shortage of primary care physicians in Ohio.

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