



March 31, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
U.S. Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso, MD
U.S. Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Schatz and Barrasso:

On behalf of the more than 84,000 members of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), I would like to express our strong support for the *Ensuring Access to General Surgery Act* (S. 1140). This important legislation would direct the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to study and define general surgery workforce shortage areas and grant the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to provide a general surgery shortage area designation.

General surgeons are uniquely trained and qualified to provide certain necessary, lifesaving procedures, making them an essential element of a community-based health system. However, unlike other key providers, general surgeons do not currently have a formal workforce shortage area designation. Recent reports from [HRSA](#) as well as the [WWAMI Rural Health Research Center](#) show a maldistribution of the surgical workforce, with widespread and significant shortages of general surgeons, particularly in rural areas. Unfortunately, current available data are not able to indicate if the supply of general surgeons in a geographic area is adequate to provide access to the services demanded by the population, largely because there is no agreed upon definition of what constitutes a surgical shortage.

Optimal quality, the centerpiece of ACS' mission, is not achievable without optimal access. S. 1140 will allow HRSA to determine what constitutes a surgical shortage and designate areas where patients lack access to surgical services, providing a valuable new tool for increasing patient access to the full spectrum of high-quality health care, regardless of geographic location. Thank you for your efforts and leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you to ensure enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Turner", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patricia L. Turner, MD, MBA, FACS
Executive Director & CEO

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