



For Immediate Release

September 29, 2023

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**FMEC Statement on Potential Loss of University Hospitals
Cleveland Medical Center Family Medicine Residency Training Program**

DAYTON, OHIO – The Family Medicine Education Consortium (FMEC) supports an expansion of training programs for family medicine residents and therefore opposes the announced closing of the residency program at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center.

The FMEC works with medical schools and over 200 family medicine residency training programs (FMRs) in 14 northeast U.S. states, including Ohio. Every day, our members, their patients and their communities see the need for more primary care providers. Through our programs to serve FMRs and to engage medical students in learning about primary care, we strive to increase the number of family physicians nationwide. Our leadership is dismayed by the announcement by University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center to phase out its family medicine residency.

Any reduction in the capacity to train family physicians is a step backwards. We need more family physicians. They are the most critical providers in the healthcare delivery system, serving as the entry point and coordinator of care for millions of patients. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC)¹, there will be a primary care physician shortage of between 17,800 and 48,000 doctors by 2034. Globally, healthcare systems based on primary care have less health inequity, better quality of care, and lower healthcare expenditures. In countries with better access to primary care, patients are less likely to forgo needed care, and more likely to have better health outcomes². The opportunities to create strong family physicians need to grow, not shrink.

The decision is backwards for healthcare generally, but also for Greater Cleveland and Ohio. Ending the residency program will hurt access to healthcare in underserved communities who rely on the Cleveland medical center's primary care services. According to US Census Data, the vast majority of East Cleveland's population identifies as historically marginalized (predominately Black), and nearly half are living within federal poverty guidelines. Keeping the program open will help ensure this community has access to care, while also providing family medicine residents and medical students with critical experience providing specialized care to an urban population. Closing the program will send the message that University Hospitals is not invested in serving diverse, marginalized communities suffering from healthcare disparities, or supporting the providers who serve them.

The FMEC urges decision makers at University Hospitals to reverse this decision and continue to support and fund the program. The UH CMC program is one of only two in the country accredited to train physicians in both family medicine and in public health, which is also a growing area of need in the U.S. Please do not take the opportunity away from today's medical students to enroll at this well-respected, unique teaching hospital and follow their passions into primary care. We know medical students are distressed by the news, and that more

¹ <https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download>

² <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2022/mar/primary-care-high-income-countries-how-united-states-compares>



than 160 Case Western Reserve University medical students have written to University Hospitals officials to voice concern. As we approach the FMEC's Annual Meeting in mid-October, at which over 300 medical students will meet over 90 FMRs and become inspired to pursue family medicine, we hope to be able to deliver a message that family medicine is valued and growing. Please do not become the latest example of disinvestment in primary care in our region and country.

About the Family Medicine Education Consortium

The FMEC is a catalyst, convener, and incubator that connects family physicians and other stakeholders to improve the health communities by strengthening family medicine, primary care and medical education. The FMEC serves 14 states and the District of Columbia in the northeast region of the U.S., working with 60 medical school departments of family medicine, over 200 family medicine residency programs, and thousands of family physicians and other health care providers in community settings. Through an Annual Meeting for nearly 1,000 health professionals, annual awards, learning communities, and quality improvement projects, the FMEC inspires medical students to seek careers in family medicine, strengthens academic family medicine through faculty development and leadership experiences, and stimulates innovative approaches to primary care service delivery.