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NEWS

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MEDIA ADVISORY

BUSM STUDENTS HIT HARD BY SCHOLARSHIP CUTS

Boston, Mass.--Medical students at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM), their family members and friends--angry at the elimination of scholarships already promised under the health professional student contract program--will join other medical and health-profession students for Student Lobby Day at the Statehouse on Wednesday, September 27, to urge their lawmakers to restore funding for the program.

The elimination of the scholarship funds is having an enormous impact on the ability of 27 BUSM students to finance their medical school education and may influence their future career choices. The students--who are financially needy Massachusetts residents--have had to find alternative and more expensive funding for their medical school tuition. Students with high debts may enter higher-paying specialties in order to meet their financial obligations rather than enter primary care or other needed specialties that have lower salaries.

"I found out that my scholarship was cut a few weeks before school started," says Timothy Hough, class of 1992. "I'm angry that the state has reneged on its promise. Now I'm planning to get out of the state when I'm ready to start practicing medicine. I'm going to look for a state that has a more supportive atmosphere towards students and physicians."

The scholarship cuts will also affect the people of Massachusetts who live in underserved areas who will lose an important program designed to improve service in their areas. Students "pay back" the scholarships by serving in underserved areas or in under-represented specialties in the state for half the time they received scholarships. Without the scholarships, students

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will not be fulfilling these public-health needs throughout the state.

This program, which began in 1976, was created to encourage two of the Commonwealth's private medical schools to continue to accept a substantial number of Massachusetts residents into their M.D. programs and to assist these students in financing their educations. The contract provided that the two schools--BUSM and Tufts University School of Medicine--would accept a minimum of seven Massachusetts residents in each class. In turn, the legislature made funds available to the schools to provide the students with partial scholarships.

When the program was developed, no mechanism was established to facilitate pay-back requirements, whether service related or financial. BUSM designed a State Health Service Corps (SHSC) to formalize scholarship pay back and to respond to the state's health-care needs. In 1987, the legislature approved and funded the development of the SHSC. BUSM's Area Health Education Center administers the SHSC for BUSM and Tufts graduates. If the scholarships are not funded, BUSM will not administer the SHSC, and many areas of the state that are currently benefiting from these physician services will lose this care.

To date, the SHSC has placed 10 scholarship recipients in areas designated by the state as underserved and is currently working to place the group of physicians that will complete their residencies this year.