Dear Committee Members,

We deeply appreciate the opportunity to comment on the recently proposed changes to the Preventive Medicine Residency requirements. Let us take a moment to introduce our society. The Aerospace Medical Association (AsMA) is the largest organization representing professionals involved in aviation, space and environmental medicine, and is an international body of physicians, researchers, physiologists, nurses and technicians. The American Society of Aerospace Medicine Specialists (ASAMS) is a non-profit constituent organization of AsMA created to serve as a voice for Aerospace Medicine specialists in the United States. ASAMS was established specifically to focus on the professional needs and interests of American physicians who are Aerospace Medicine Specialists. All our full members must be physicians (MD or DO), AsMA members and Board Certified in Aerospace Medicine by an American Board. Two key goals from our mission statement are...

- establishing standards for the specialty of Aerospace Medicine, including but not limited to, the development of core-competencies for residents in Aerospace Medicine and practice guidelines for Aerospace Medicine practitioners and...
- promoting and preserving the highest professional standards of care among practitioners of Aerospace Medicine.

ASAMS fully supports improving the quality of graduate medical education in Preventive Medicine through enhancing residency curriculum and composition. We have always felt that a firm clinical base is the foundation for strong preventive medicine and population health. In today's rapidly progressing and increasingly complex clinical environment, more clinical training is a welcomed improvement, which all of our training programs already incorporate. Still, we do have significant concerns regarding the narrow definition of our specialty and the language surrounding the academic course requirements.
Aerospace Medicine is not simply the care of aviators and astronauts. Application of the physiologic challenges of the aviation and spaceflight environments to all manner of personnel associated with these environments lies at the heart of Aerospace Medicine’s impact. Affected populations include not simply pilots and other aircrew, but air ambulance or medical evacuation patients, maintenance personnel and air traffic controllers. A systems approach to overall aviation safety as well as human factors and risk assessment are core competencies of our specialty, as well as all aspects of human performance and reliability. In fact, the majority of practitioners of Aerospace Medicine essentially or actually operate large metropolitan health departments or community-based prevention programs well beyond the tiny fraction of aviators and astronauts. Altering the scope of practice to exclude support personnel will weaken the Aerospace Medicine’s impact on overall safety and reliability. Thus, we urge reconsideration of this reduction in scope of practice recommendation.

Additionally, we are concerned by the recommendation to remove the Masters in Public Health (MPH) or equivalent as a requirement. By its very structure and practice, clinical medicine focuses physicians on the individual patient, via the patient encounter and the unique doctor-patient relationship which establishes the trust required to practice good medicine. While the MPH is not strictly a form of graduate medical education (in that a medical degree is not required to receive an MPH), the course of study of the MPH is critical in transitioning our practitioners to the wider view of population health. And while the five core courses in the proposed requirement are necessary for making the leap to population-based thinking, we feel they are insufficient in cementing the perspective required for quality Aerospace Medicine specialists. Just as medical school and clinical residencies reinforce the individual clinical view, so too does the MPH course of study provide our practitioners smooth progression to the “population plane” of medical thinking. We strongly believe that completion of an MPH or equivalent is critical in the training of quality Preventive Medicine specialists and therefore, that completion of an MPH or equivalent would be necessary as academic requirements for certification in Aerospace Medicine.

The physicians of ASAMS stand ready to support the ACGME in its ongoing efforts to maintain and refine the high standards of American residency training in Aerospace Medicine. Thank you again for the opportunity to represent and promote the interests of Aerospace Medicine physicians.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Young, MD, MPH  
Immediate Past President, ASAMS

Hernando J. Ortega, Jr., MD, MPH  
Secretary, ASAMS