



Letters to the editor

Yul D. Ejnes: We must bail out primary care, too

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The government is committing hundreds of billions of dollars to financial institutions in crisis to prevent the collapse of the nation's financial system. Whether taxpayers will ever see a return on this investment is not clear.

Meanwhile, another important sector of our economy is collapsing. The report that only 2 percent of medical students plan to go into primary-care medicine calls attention to a problem that has been developing for years and threatens the foundation of our health-care system. Primary-care medicine, which is provided by general internists, family physicians, pediatricians and osteopathic physicians, is in danger of disappearing. Fewer new doctors are going into primary care and many experienced primary-care doctors are leaving the field early. The result is a growing shortage of the doctors who are your first stop when you are sick.

The solution to this crisis will also require a financial investment by the government, but one that is significantly smaller than the one made this week. Unlike the bailout of the financial institutions, the taxpayers can expect a strong return on their investment in primary care, because studies show that a strong primary-care system results in better quality of care at a lower cost.

It is time for the government to take prompt action to avoid the collapse of primary care, just as it did for the banks, mortgage companies and investment firms.

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