HELEN WHATELY MP
Member of Parliament for Faversham and Mid Kent

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Professor Karen Cox, University of Kent
Cc: Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Canterbury Christ Church University
Debra Teasdale, Canterbury Christ Church University
Hazel Smith, Thanet CCG and South Kent Coast CCG

14 November 2017

Dear Professor Cox,

We, the undersigned Members of Parliament for Kent and Medway, fully support the joint bid from Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent to establish a medical school in the Kent and Medway area.

A medical school would bring a host of benefits to our region. Kent and Medway NHS organisations are facing severe recruitment challenges and the region is also home to some significantly disadvantaged communities, particularly along the coastline. A local medical school will help to address these challenges, attracting newly qualified and senior doctors, and improving health outcomes for the population.

NHS organisations in Kent and Medway are facing critical challenges in recruitment of Senior Clinicians and General Practitioners. Acute services in East Kent have had to be temporarily reconfigured because of a shortage of Senior Clinicians, and there is an identified need for an additional 530 GPs in order to bring the GPs per population figure up to the national average. Kent, Surrey and Sussex collectively have the lowest proportion of medical student intake when compared to the proportion of the UK population resident in those areas (2.3% intake for 8.2% of the UK population in 2014[1]). Kent is one of the largest areas in the UK without its own medical school. Yet the demands on local services are ever-increasing, with the population of the South East set to grow by 722,000 (8.1%) by 2024. What's more, the population is 'inflated' on an ongoing basis by the 60 million tourists who visit Kent or transit through the county from overseas.

We know that medical students from London medical schools are deterred from doing clinical placements in Kent because of travel time, costs and distance from their 'home' school. Locating a medical school in Kent would give medical students from elsewhere the opportunity to become familiar with the area and consider it when applying for jobs following graduation. It would enable young people and mature students living in Kent and Medway the opportunity to study medicine close to home. Locating a medical school in Kent will produce graduates with a strong sense of affiliation to the local area, evidenced by Canterbury Christ Church University health professional graduates who remain in Kent and Medway Health, practicing locally.

Cont://

[1] Source: Health Education England

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Equally the research and education opportunities would attract more senior doctors to our hospitals and GP surgeries. This combination would be significant help in tackling our NHS recruitment challenges.

Kent and Medway has much to offer for medical students, and this bid is fully supported by local NHS organisations. The universities are committed to offering a curriculum and experience which will train doctors in the skills needed for future healthcare, with strong capabilities and experience in primary and community care settings and a multi-disciplinary ethos. The area already has leading primary care facilities at scale such as the Estuary View Health Centre in Whitstable, which would provide an outstanding placement experience for students. In addition, we have a nationally recognised 'primary care home' scheme in Thanet led by local GPs and building a future proof model of a primary care led clinical network around the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital. The diversity and health challenges among local populations would give students exposure to a wide range of health needs. Canterbury Christ Church University already educates nursing and midwifery students as well as offering training in physiotherapy, operating department practice and radiography; with medical students, this will be a truly multi-disciplinary education setting. The medical school would also have a positive impact on educational ambition and outcomes for the children of Kent.

Our area has an established life sciences research and development industry, in part a legacy of the Pfizer location in East Kent; a medical school would have the potential to contribute to the development of this important sector of the economy to the benefit of the region and the country.

We face serious health inequalities across Kent & Medway, with life expectancy approximately for males up to eight years lower in the most deprived areas such as the coastal communities than the rest of the county[2]. These communities provide some of the greatest opportunities for health gain potential in the country but we must have the healthcare workforce to achieve this.

We firmly believe that a medical school would be transformative for our local health services. It would have a major positive impact on morale across the entire healthcare workforce, and encourage the innovation, investment and new developments clearly needed in Kent. We urge you to consider these potential benefits when reviewing the proposal for a medical school in Kent and Medway.

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[2] Source: Kent County Council, Mind The Gap: Health Inequalities Action Plan for Kent Analytical Report, 2016

Yours sincerely,

Helen Whately MP
Faversham and Mid Kent

Damian Collins MP
Folkestone and Hythe

Sir Roger Gale MP
North Thanet

Craig Mackinlay MP
South Thanet

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Tunbridge Wells

Helen Grant MP
Maidstone and the Weald

Kelly Tolhurst MP
Rochester and Strood

Tracey Crouch MP
Chatham and Aylesford

Rt Hon Damian Green MP
Ashford

Tom Tugendhat MP
Tonbridge and Malling

Rosie Duffield MP
Canterbury

Gordon Henderson MP
Sittingbourne and Sheppey

Charlie Elphicke MP
Dover

Adam Holloway MP
Gravesham

Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP
Sevenoaks

Gareth Johnson MP
Dartford