

The Workforce Needed for Quality Care

Securing a Dynamic Primary Care Workforce to Serve Future Generations

Background

No community health center would be able to deliver on its promise of high-quality, affordable, accessible and culturally competent care without its most valuable resource: its workforce. High-quality patient care, especially in the underserved areas health centers serve, demands an **integrated, multidisciplinary team**, drawing on **a range of clinical disciplines** and administrative expertise.

Because of a persistent national shortage of clinicians, particularly in rural and underserved areas, most health centers currently **struggle to recruit and retain the clinical workforce necessary** to meet patient needs.

The Facts

- Today more than 11 million people are cared for by National Health Service Corps (NHSC) clinicians. More than half of these clinicians serve in health centers. Yet **many health centers still cannot gain access to NHSC providers** due to insufficient funding.
- A 2015 analysis by the American Association of Medical Colleges estimated that the United States may face a **shortage of up to 90,000 physicians** by 2025. Shortages in primary care, projected to be up to 31,000 by that date, are among the most severe.
- More than **95% of health centers say they currently have at least one current staff vacancy**. Health centers themselves estimate that if staffing needs were met, collectively they could be serving an **additional two million patients**.
- **Most health centers are involved in health professions education and/or residency training**, but a much smaller number are designated **Teaching Health Centers (THCs)**, a promising model that puts the training directly in the community. Many health centers are interested in becoming THCs, but have been hesitant given funding uncertainty.

The Challenge

As with Health Center funding, without action by Congress, funding for the National Health Service Corps and Teaching Health Centers programs will expire as of September 30th. This would immediately jeopardize the care provided by the more than 10,000 NHSC clinicians today, and reverse progress on a bipartisan move toward community-based training.

Our Request

To ensure that health centers remain strong and stable, we request that Members:

1. **Fully fund the National Health Service Corps** by renewing funding at levels necessary to provide scholarships and loan repayment to thousands more clinicians.
2. **Invest in Teaching Health Centers** by providing necessary funding to preserve current programs and put the THC model on a path to long-term sustainability and growth. This includes ensuring a sufficient per-resident amount so that the true costs of residency training are fully addressed.