

Planning for the Future Health Center Workforce

Growing Today's Primary Care Workforce
to Meet Tomorrow's Health Care Needs

Community Health Centers depend upon a network of over 253,000 clinicians, providers, and staff to deliver on the promise of affordable and accessible health care. Long-term investments in **the nation's primary care** workforce are needed to achieve the cost-savings the country needs and ensure health centers are able to keep pace with the growing and changing needs in their communities.

Yet severe workforce shortages and growing salary gaps make it difficult for health centers to recruit and retain an integrated, multi-disciplinary workforce to provide high-quality care. For example, the Association of American Medical Colleges estimates a **national shortage of between 54,100 and 139,000 physicians by 2033**. Additionally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects **175,900 openings for Registered Nurses each year through 2029** when nurse retirements and workforce exits are factored into the number of nurses needed in the U.S. Moreover, recent health care compensation data shows that **health center primary care physicians earn approximately 30% less** when compared for those same disciplines for physicians who work for hospitals.

Two critical workforce programs - the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program – are slated to receive additional funding in the American Rescue Plan. Yet the remaining workforce needs are significant.

The NHSC supports roughly 16,000 clinicians in urban, rural, and frontier communities. About 60% of all NHSC placements are at health centers.

- Thousands of additional applications to join the NHSC go unfunded each year. The \$800 million for NHSC and \$200 million for Nurse Corps in the American Rescue Plan will boost the number of approved applications, extending this opportunity to additional underserved communities.

The THCGME model directly trains providers at health centers in underserved communities, improving their understanding of the issues facing health center patients and increasing the likelihood they will choose to practice in these communities after they complete their training.

- In the 2018-2019 academic year, THCGME supported the training of 769 residents in 60 health centers in 25 states. Since it began in 2011, the program has supported the training of more than 1,148 new primary care physicians and dentists who have graduated and entered the workforce.
- The American Rescue Plan committed \$330 million to expand the THCGME program.

How you can help:

- **Support the American Rescue Plan's investment in the health care workforce.**
- **Support at least \$7 billion to address chronic workforce shortages at Community Health Centers.**
 - This funding would enable health centers to attract and retain highly qualified caregivers and continue providing care on the frontlines, especially in primary care and related areas.
- **Cosponsor the Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act (S. 54)**, from Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), to invest \$5 billion in the NHSC, \$1 billion in the Nurse Corps, and create a pilot to harness members of the NHSC workforce to serve in emergency capacities through the National Disaster Medical System.