

Primary Care Training and Enhancement Grants For Physician Assistant (PA) Programs

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Fast Facts

- There will be a **projected shortage of 20,400 primary care physicians** in the United States in 2020.¹
- Physician assistants are trained to provide the **vast majority of services** rendered by physicians and can assist in alleviating primary care provider shortages.²
- **Expanded access** to primary care services has been demonstrated to provide **improved outcomes at lower costs**.³
- The Primary Care Training and Enhancement Grants (PCTE) program provides PA programs with the resources necessary to train **high-quality, experienced** primary care providers.⁴

What's the Issue?

The American health care system is on the precipice of a primary care workforce crisis. In 2015, an estimated 45,500 vacancies were posted for PA positions in the United States.⁵ As the burden of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes rises, ensuring the availability of a sufficient number of primary care providers with the training to provide value-based care to patients must become a top priority. In recognition of the inherent value provided by primary care providers to patients' health, Congress currently funds PCTE grants under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act at a level of \$2.4 million annually. While this level of funding has contributed to innovation in educating the next generation of health professionals, increased demand for primary care services illustrates the need for a greater commitment by Congress to adequate workforce development.

What's the Solution?

PCTE grants for PA education programs should be funded at a level of \$12 million annually. With this allocation, PA education programs would be fully supported in developing innovative curricula to prepare students for real-world clinical scenarios, ultimately improving the quality of care provided to patients. H.R. 1605, the Physician Assistant Education Public Health Initiatives Act of 2017, introduced by Rep. Karen Bass (D-CA), would begin the process of increasing the impact of Primary Care Training and Enhancement grants by reauthorizing the program through fiscal year 2022.

For additional information, please contact Director of Government Relations Athena Abdullah at aabdullah@PAEAonline.org.

REFERENCE

¹ Health Resources and Services Administration, Projecting the Supply and Demand for Primary Care Practitioners Through 2020, November 2013. <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/health-workforce-analysis/primary-care-2020>. Accessed June 12, 2017.

² Primary Care Physician Shortages Could Be Eliminated Through Use of Teams, Nonphysicians, and Electronic Communication, Health Affairs, January 2013. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/32/1/11.full>. Accessed June 12, 2017.

³ Primary Care: A Critical Review of the Evidence on Quality and Costs of Health Care, Health Affairs, May 2010. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/29/5/766.full>. Accessed June 12, 2017.

⁴ Health Resources and Services Administration, Primary Care Training and Enhancement Physician Assistant Training in Primary Care Program, 2012. <https://bhwh.hrsa.gov/fundingopportunities/default.aspx?id=de706e55-a407-4add-87fd-ab9d8cec71ca>. Accessed June 12, 2017.

⁵ The Ten Most Promising Jobs of 2015, Forbes, January 27, 2015. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2015/01/27/the-ten-most-promising-jobs-of-2015/#73d366511f93>. Accessed June 12, 2017.

