

Pennsylvania Health Care Workforce

BACKGROUND

Pennsylvania's network of Community Health Centers serves almost one million patients annually with more than 3 million visits at more than 400 sites in underserved rural and urban areas throughout Pennsylvania. More than 87% of the patients FQHCs serve are at 200% of the Federal Poverty Level or lower and are the population most impacted by Social Determinants of Health including access to transportation, paid sick leave, stable housing options, support systems, etc. FQHCs are the only health care providers that accept all patients, regardless of their ability to pay by offering sliding scale fees for services, providing physical health care, behavioral health care, and dental care across Pennsylvania. All of this is at risk due to an ever-increasing lack of access to a healthcare workforce to the growing demand for their services.

Support for Pennsylvania Primary Health Care Practitioner Program

The recruitment of physicians, nurse practitioners, mental health professionals, dentists and other skilled health care professionals is key to caring for Pennsylvanians long after the pandemic. That is why it is imperative that the General Assembly support an increase in the Primary Health Care Practitioner Program (PHCPP). As the state continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, programs like PHCPP become even more critical to ensure we have a viable health care workforce to meet the demand for health care services in the short- and long-term.

The PHCPP funding allows organizations across Pennsylvania to train and place clinicians in underserved communities, provide technical assistance to primary care clinicians and health care facilities in rural areas and support the Commonwealth's network of safety-net providers. The line item also supports the state's Primary Care Loan Repayment Program, which offers funding for educational loan repayment to primary care clinicians practicing in underserved communities. This program acts as a financial incentive for the recruitment and retention of physicians, dentists, mental and behavioral health professionals, and other primary care clinicians in areas that lack access to primary care and helps Pennsylvania health care employers compete with other states to secure clinicians to practice in the Commonwealth.

SOLUTION

Restore funding for the Primary Health Care Loan Forgiveness Program (PHCLP) in the Department of Health by \$2.8 million, bringing the total to \$8.35 million.



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Support for Pennsylvania Primary Care Preceptorship Program

The Pennsylvania Primary Care Preceptorship Program (PPCPP) is part of the solution to addressing provider shortage and improving recruitment and retention of providers for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) in areas affected by the maldistribution of healthcare professionals today, tomorrow and into the future.

The program would help FQHCs to cover some of the costs of providing preceptorships to students in high demand medical fields while exposing the students to the benefits of providing care in a community setting. FQHCs are struggling to find a qualified workforce to meet the growing demands to care and are unable to compete with hospitals and other large healthcare employers for a limited workforce. This program would help to expose students to the benefits of community health care and assist FQHCs in meeting the needs of the community, with the goal of retaining Pennsylvania's highly trained health care workforce in a community health setting and/or in Pennsylvania.

A similar program has been in effect in Ohio for the past six years and that program is working to educate and retain Ohio students in various health care fields. The Ohio Primary Care Workforce Initiative (OPCWI) over the past six years has precepted 5,839 student rotations for a total of 631,955.61 student clinical hours partnering with 129 Health Professional Programs and 96 Schools/Universities. Students that have participated in the Ohio program have given the program high satisfaction scores.

Solution

Support SB 817: the Primary Care Preceptorship Program for Community Health Centers.

Allow Nurse Practitioners Full Practice Authority

Allow Certified Registered Nurse Practitioners to practice to the full extent of their education and training by removing the requirement for a formal collaborative agreement currently required for them to practice and write prescriptions. This, combined with the new licensing standard, will allow APRN-CNPs to provide health care in an environment free from unnecessary administrative burdens.

FQHCs across Pennsylvania employ more than 300 Nurse Practitioners who account for more than 750,000 patient visits per year and who contribute to our positive outcomes--quality of care that is validated by publicly available data. Passage of this legislation will allow more NPs across Pennsylvania to take care of populations, including rural and those in need of mental health services, that are too often left behind in access to health care. Twenty-seven other states and the District of Columbia currently allow nurse practitioners full practice authority.

Solution

Support SB 25/HB 1825: Modernization of the Professional Nursing Law.



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