

March 21, 2019

## Support Legislation to Increase Number of Medicare-funded Residency Slots

### Bicameral, Bipartisan Legislation Would Increase Medicare Support for Graduate Medical Education (GME)

The IHA-supported bipartisan *Medicare Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2019* ([S. 348](#) / [H.R. 1763](#)) would increase the number of Medicare-funded residency positions by 15,000 over five years, beginning in fiscal year 2021. Rep. Rodney Davis (IL-13) is an original cosponsor of the House version, which was introduced last week. The Senate companion was introduced in February.

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Contact your U.S. Senators and Representative and urge them to support and co-sponsor the *Medicare Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2019*, S. 348 and H.R. 1763. To send emails to your members of Congress, [click here](#).

### Background

Since its inception, Medicare's partnership with teaching hospitals has helped offset the cost of training physicians through the Medicare graduate medical education (GME) program, which currently helps support Illinois' five world-class academic medical centers and 55 teaching hospitals in their mission to train the next generation of physicians.

However, since 1997, the federal government's support for GME has been constrained by a federally mandated limit on the number of Medicare-funded residency positions. The *Medicare Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act* is needed to lift this statutory limit and help address the looming physician shortage, which is predicted by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), to reach between 40,800 to 104,900 by 2030.

The House and Senate bills would distribute the additional slots according to slightly different methodologies. However, both bills would prioritize certain hospitals, including those which currently train residents at a number that exceeds the current limit, hospitals in states with new medical schools or branch campuses, and those which emphasize training in community-based settings or hospital outpatient departments. Both bills also require a report on increasing the diversity of the healthcare professional workforce.

### Suggested Talking points:

- I urge you to co-sponsor the *Medicare Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act* (S. 348 / H.R. 1763).
- This legislation would increase the number of Medicare-funded residency positions by 15,000 over five years, beginning in fiscal year 2021 to help address a looming and growing shortage of physicians.
- Illinois' academic medical centers and 55 teaching hospitals train the next generation of physicians, care for the sickest patients and provide specialized services, such as trauma care, organ transplantation, burn care and neonatal intensive care.
- Currently, more than 6,000 medical residents and fellows train in Illinois' academic medical centers and teaching hospitals, making Illinois among the leading states in training tomorrow's physician workforce.
- However, our state ranks 45<sup>th</sup> among states in general surgeons available per 100,000 residents.
- The U.S. population aged 65 and older is predicted to grow by 50 percent by 2030 -- the same year physician shortages

are predicted to reach between 40,800 to 104,900.

- Congress must act now to expand the physician workforce — especially as it takes up to 10 years to train a physician.
  - Please co-sponsor the *Medicare Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act* (S. 348/ H.R.1763).
  - Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.
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