

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 **255,000 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 to ensure health centers can keep pace with the growing and changing health needs in their communities. 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**. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this reality, increasing health center provider shortages due to burn-out, early retirement, sickness, and marketplace competition. **Continued federal investment is essential to broadening the workforce pipelines health centers depend on to provide care to patients**. Prioritizing funding for primary care workforce programs is critical as there continues to be efforts for a more focused approach and increased attention to primary care. Leading this call is a recent report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) entitled, *Implementing High-Quality Primary Care: Rebuilding the Foundation of Health Care*. Longer-term shifts that support interprofessional primary care teams will be essential.

The Key Workforce Pipeline Programs Include:

- Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program
- National Health Service Corps (NHSC)
- Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program
- Title VII Health Professions
- Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs

The **NHSC supports nearly 20,000 clinicians in urban, rural, and frontier communities**. More than half of all NHSC members serve in a Community Health Center.

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. 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.

Title VII Health Professions and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs provide education, professional development, and financial aid to health profession students. **The programs train the next generation of health professionals – ensuring the future workforce reflects the diversity, skills, and needs of the communities it serves**. Both programs prepare students for careers in primary care, dentistry, community-based medicine, public health, informatics, nursing, and geriatrics.

The Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program pays up to 85% of unpaid nursing education debt for registered nurses (RNs), advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), and nurse faculty (NF). **More than 2,500 Nurse Corps clinicians provide care to over 2 million underserved patients across the U.S.**, including many at Community Health Centers.

How you can help:

- Support at least **\$3.37 billion for the THCGME program, \$2 billion for the NHSC, and \$500 million for the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program**.
- **Support robust FY22 and FY23 appropriations funding for all primary care workforce programs**, including the Title VII Health Professions and Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development programs.