

# Proof of physicians' economic impact sways policy at state level

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In-depth, state-by-state data on how physicians do their part to power the economy are far more than just an interesting collection of figures. They are a hardworking set of numbers that state medical associations successfully use to argue on behalf of patients and physicians.

A case in point is the Idaho Medical Association (IMA), in keeping with its efforts to attract physicians to the medically underserved state and maintain a practice climate that will make those doctors want to stay. Association CEO Susie Pouliot uses the AMA's physician economic impact study to help lawmakers understand benefits the state's 2,738 patient-care physicians bring in terms of economic output, jobs, employee compensation and tax revenue—all that on top of health care.

"We have used this economic impact data to emphasize we need more physicians in Idaho, and here is the benefit that we get when we make policies that enable us to draw more physicians to practice in our state," said Pouliot. "This information has just been incredibly valuable to us and the level of sophistication of the numbers and the calculations, I think, are very impressive to some of our Idaho legislators."

Pouliot is using the data in a major IMA campaign to get increased state funding for a 10-year program to raise the number of graduate medical education positions there. A first-year, \$5.2 million commitment is needed to fund the first 17 slots. In Idaho's fiscally conservative statehouse, that spending must first be seen as a wise investment. Pouliot combined the AMA study's credible figures with the IMA's own deep understanding of the state's physician workforce to create a compelling case for a sound return on that investment.

"We say, 'Hey, if you invest in training, say, 100 new physicians in Idaho—with our retention rates, we expect 50 of them to stay. And here is the economic impact,'" explained Pouliot.

It is a contribution to the state's prosperity that some lawmakers may not have fully considered. "I think they are surprised at the extent of just how much we [physicians] contribute and I think the jobs

figure is especially interesting,” said Pouliot.

According to the AMA’s study, Idaho physicians directly and indirectly account for 33,179 jobs—more than a dozen per doctor—representing total wages and benefits of \$2.5 billion. In terms of total state and local tax revenue, the figure is \$168.6 million. Visit [PhysiciansEconomicImpact.org](https://PhysiciansEconomicImpact.org) to explore an interactive national map and discover the economic impact of physicians in your state.

That data can come in handy when defending past victories. Changes “that could cause physicians to want to leave the state are things that we watch very carefully,” said Pouliot, who has used the data “to play defense against proposed reimbursement cuts or proposed laws that would create a more negative liability environment.”

The data is an advocacy force multiplier in state-level efforts across the country, but it can carry special value to smaller state medical societies. “The benefit that the AMA provides to us is way beyond anything we can do ourselves,” said Pouliot. “We are an office of nine people, so to have these sorts of resources to bring to bear in our advocacy efforts is just incredibly valuable.”

“The National Economic Impact of Physicians” report, and individual state reports, are a project of the AMA’s Advocacy Resource Center, as part of its mission to support state and national medical societies in their work on behalf of patients and physicians. QuintilesIMS compiled the research. The current report is the third in the series, started in 2011, and includes the District of Columbia. Nationally, the research found physicians are directly and indirectly responsible for a \$2.3 trillion contribution to the nation’s economy and support nearly 12.6 million jobs.

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