



Sept. 30–Oct. 2

AMA ADVOCACY IN ACTION WORKSHOP



Advocating for Future Physicians: Addressing Physician Workforce Shortages and Medical Student Debt

The U.S. faces a growing physician shortage, exacerbated by an aging population and the high cost of medical education. To meet future healthcare demands, investment in Graduate Medical Education (GME) is essential.

Physician Shortage Crisis

The U.S. is projected to face a shortfall of 86,000 physicians by 2036, driven by an aging population, physician burnout, and early retirements. Despite growing demand, the number of federally funded residency positions has remained largely unchanged since 1997. The result: more medical graduates than available residency spots.

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) projects that if historically underserved communities received comparable access to the rest of the population, 202,800 more physicians would have been needed in 2021.

Nearly 67% of medical graduates have student debt, averaging \$200,000, excluding undergraduate loans. Medical school costs continue to rise, averaging about \$270,000 for public schools and about \$370,000 for private schools. During residency, stipends average \$62,000 annually, leading many to defer loan payments, which can double the amount that must be repaid over the life of the loan due to accrued interest. While the 2023 Saving on A Valuable Education (SAVE) plan aims to ease this burden, its future remains uncertain, pending Supreme Court review.

Additional costs also challenge students before they even begin training, including medical school application fees (\$1,000), residency-related costs (\$700-\$1,500), and exam fees (MCAT and USMLE).

Legislative Solutions

Recent legislation has made strides in addressing the GME shortfall. The 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act added 1,000 new Medicare-supported GME positions over five years, and the 2023 Act provided 200 positions for psychiatric specialties. But further action is needed to meet demand across all specialties, especially in rural and underserved areas.

1. **Resident Education Deferred Interest (REDI) Act (H.R. 1202/S. 704)** introduced by Sens. Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and John Boozman (R-AD), and Reps Brian Babin, DDS (R-TX) and Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA), would allow medical and dental residents to defer student loans without interest accrual until the end of residency training.
2. **Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act (H.R. 2389/S. 1302)** introduced by Sens Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and John Boozman (R-AK), as well as Reps Terri Sewell (D-AL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), would gradually add 14,000 new Medicare-supported GME positions over seven years, prioritizing hospitals in rural areas, underserved communities, and institutions with historical significance such as Historically Black Medical Schools.

ACTION REQUESTED

Ask your Representative to cosponsor:

- **H.R. 2389/S. 1302**, the **Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act**, to address the physician shortage and support the future healthcare workforce.
- **H.R. 1202/S. 704**, the **REDI Act**, to ease medical student debt by allowing interest-free loan deferral during residency training.