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House Committee Moves to Alleviate Arizona’s Severe Physician Shortage

Bipartisan Passage of SB1354: Graduate Medical Education

PHOENIX – The Arizona House of Representatives Appropriations Committee today passed with bipartisan support legislation to help combat Arizona’s physician shortage.

Senate Bill 1354 will help alleviate the physician shortage by appropriating a total of $50 million split among five programs including Graduate Medical Education (GME), the University of Arizona Medical School, primary care provider loan repayment, medical student loan repayments, and nurse training.

“This legislation is an important step toward ensuring Arizona has a sufficient number of medical professionals to care for our rapidly growing population,” said Steve Purves, President and CEO of Maricopa Integrated Health System (MIHS). MIHS operates one of Arizona’s largest and longest running physician training programs and is today affiliated with the Creighton University - Arizona Health Education Alliance. “With Maricopa County set to double in population by 2040, we need to solidify a plan today to meet the healthcare needs of the Valley tomorrow.”

“We are thrilled and very appreciative of the legislature’s support in helping to address the healthcare workforce shortage in Arizona,” said Dr. Jacqueline Chadwick, executive director of the Creighton University- Arizona Health Education Alliance, which oversees more than 20 residency and fellowship programs training more than 300 learners in Phoenix. “We desperately need to retain our trainees in the state, and these funds will help us achieve that goal.”

Only 42 percent of Arizona’s medical students remain in the state after graduation, as reported by the Association of American Medical Colleges. The most significant factor impacting this rate is the shortage of post-graduation training opportunities.

Graduate Medical Education, commonly known as physician residencies, has not been state-funded in a decade, thus leaving matching federal funds on the table. Senate Bill 1354 will contribute $20 million to GME, matched by approximately $47 million in federal funds-- a total of $67 million would become available to the GME account.

“Physicians stay where they train. Nearly all medical students who finish our post-graduate training stay in-state and 67% stay in Yuma.” said Dr. Bharat Magu, Chief Medical Officer at Yuma Regional Medical Center. “State funding for Graduate Medical Education will move the needle on the state’s physician shortage and be a game-changer for rural communities like Yuma”

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Facts About Arizona’s Physician Shortage

Arizona’s physician shortage is one of the worst in the nation. The state ranks 44th of 50 states in primary care physicians. The problem is worse in rural parts of the state. More than 95% of Coconino, Santa Cruz and Yuma county residents live in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

- Arizona has primary care physician (PCP) shortages in all counties & worse in rural areas.
  - Arizona meets just 41.7% of its PCP need.
  - Arizona ranks 44th of 50 states in total active PCPs at 77.9 per 100,000 population (U.S. is 91.7)
- Arizona’s rural counties face the most severe shortages
  - 100% of residents in Yuma and Santa Cruz counties live in of primary care shortage area (HPSA)
  - 98% of residents in Cochise County live in of primary care shortage area (HPSA)
  - 68% of residents in Pinal County live in of primary care shortage area (HPSA)
  - 61% of residents in Mohave County live in of primary care shortage area (HPSA)


About the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association ([azhha.org](http://azhha.org))

Now in its 80th year, AzHHA is the association giving statewide Arizona hospitals a voice to collectively build better healthcare and health for Arizonans. As the champion for healthcare leadership in Arizona, AzHHA and its member hospitals explore ideas and take collaborative action at the state capitol, in hospitals and at home to attain the best healthcare outcomes for Arizonans. Through Better Care, Better Health and Lower Costs, we will make Arizona the Healthiest State in the Nation.