Clinical Laboratory Workforce

Position
To ensure access to quality health care services the healthcare system must have an adequate supply of clinical laboratory technologists and technicians. Today the supply is already seriously short of what is needed and estimated to become critical as the U.S. population continues to age. This shortage hampers the ability of clinical laboratories to meet the growing need for appropriate testing, impeding the ability of clinicians to diagnose and treat patients. An ever-increasing patient population and the number and complexity of medical laboratory tests are putting strains on a profession. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has served to heighten these concerns due to the workload increases which have led to burnout of some laboratory personnel.

We call upon Congress to:

- Enact the BIO Preparedness Workforce Act of 2021 (H.R.5602), introduced by Rep. Trahan (D-MA), on October 15, 2021. This bill makes clinical laboratory technologists and technicians eligible for student loan repayment in exchange for at least 3 years of service in an underserved area in the areas of bio preparedness and infectious disease.

- Establish a federal grant program to assist schools of allied health in recruiting and retaining clinical laboratory students to improve the availability of these professionals throughout the U.S. Such grants will also be able to assist programs to recruit necessary faculty and provide clinical training necessary to enter the profession.

Background

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) within the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the current clinical laboratory workforce made up of technologists and technician is 335,500. The estimated demand for these professionals will grow by 11 percent between 2020 and 2030.

The National Health Service Corp (NHSC) program exists today to place physicians, advanced practice nurses, mental health providers, and oral health providers in underserved rural and urban communities. These placements have assisted underserved populations to receive necessary care. Clinical laboratory personnel are not eligible for this program today. Rather than amend the NHSC to include laboratory professionals, we urge Congress to authorize a similar program alongside the NHSC, to specifically address the need for laboratory professionals in these underserved communities.
Federal grant programs exist today within schools of nursing and schools of medicine to address recruitment and retention of students in these professions. No such program exists for clinical laboratory professionals.

More than 4 billion medical laboratory tests are performed each year in the United States, the single highest volume medical activity. Laboratory test data influence approximately 70 percent of physicians’ patient interactions.

If you have questions regarding this issue brief, please contact the following individuals:

On Behalf of ASCLS
Patrick Cooney
(202) 413-2629
Patrick@federalgrp.com

On Behalf of AMT
Michael McCarty
Office: (202) 243-7842
Mobile: (703) 727-3776
michael@mccarty-legal.com

On Behalf of NSH
Sharon H. Kneebone, CAE, IOM
Executive Director
(443) 535-4062
sharon@nsh.org

On Behalf of ASCP
Matthew Schultz
(202) 403-1110 x2285
Matthew.Schulze@ascp.org