



Clinical Laboratory Workforce: Mission Critical

Position

Ensuring access to quality health care services demands that the health care system have an adequate supply of clinical laboratory technologists and technicians. Today the pool is already seriously short of what is needed and is estimated to become critical as the U.S. population ages. 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 strain the profession. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has heightened these concerns as workload increases lead to burnout of some laboratory personnel.

We call upon Congress to:

- **Establish a program of scholarships and loan repayment, similar but distinct from the National Health Service Corp, to alleviate the shortage of clinical laboratory personnel. The scholarship and loan repayment program shall include a period of obligated service for recipients in a designated health professional shortage area.**
- **Establish a federal grant program to assist allied health schools in recruiting and retaining clinical laboratory students to improve the availability of these professionals throughout the U.S. Such grants will also help programs recruit necessary faculty and provide clinical training required 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 of technologists and technicians 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 in receiving necessary care. Clinical laboratory professionals 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 address the need for laboratory professionals in these underserved communities.

Federal grant programs exist today within schools of nursing and medicine to address the recruitment and retention of students in these professions. No such program exists for clinical laboratory professionals. Such a program would be valuable in helping allied health schools recruit and retain students, recruit necessary faculty, and provide clinical training required for students to enter the profession rapidly.

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

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