



Support the Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Relief Act (H.R.9849)

Position

On September 25, 2024, the **Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Relief Act of 2024 (H.R.9849)** was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congresswoman Deborah Ross (D-NC). H.R.9849 would add medical laboratory professionals to the National Health Service Corps and provide grants to accredited institutions to train more personnel. This legislation will support patients by helping to address the current national shortage of clinical laboratory professionals.

Ensuring access to quality health care services demands that the health care system have an adequate supply of medical laboratory scientists (MLS) and medical laboratory technicians (MLT). 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 for some laboratory personnel.

Background

Estimates suggest that more than 13 billion laboratory tests are performed annually and may impact as many as 70 percent of all patient interactions, emphasizing the critical role lab testing plays in diagnosis and treatment plans.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, thousands of applicants to MLS and MLT programs were unable to enroll because of limited capacity in many programs. Access to federal grant resources can assist allied health schools, increasing the capacity to train those with an interest in laboratory science. Such grants will also help programs recruit necessary faculty and provide clinical training required to enter the profession.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the demand for clinical laboratory personnel, including technologists and technicians, is projected to grow by 5 percent from 2023

to 2033. The need for clinical laboratory personnel is driven largely by an aging population, which increases the demand for medical testing to diagnose, treat, and prevent disease. Over the decade, there are expected to be about 24,200 job openings each year, primarily due to the need to replace workers who retire or leave the field.

According to the most recent data from the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS), around 4,200 students graduated from accredited MLS programs in 2023. Approximately 2,600 students graduated from MLT programs. Access to federal grant resources will help MLS and MLT programs to bridge the delta between demand and supply of laboratory personnel in the U.S.

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 aided underserved populations in receiving necessary care. Medical laboratory professionals are currently not eligible for this program today. NHSC loan repayment recipients agree to serve in underserved communities throughout the U.S.

To cosponsor H.R.9849 please contact Puj Adusumilli in Rep. Ross' office at puj.adusumilli@mail.house.gov. Please contact Patrick Cooney at 202-413-2629 or via email at patrick@federalgrp.com if you have any questions regarding this issue brief.