

**Statement by the Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition on FY 2026
Appropriations Submitted for the Record to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies – April 9, 2025**

The Health Professions and Nursing Education Coalition (HPNEC) is an alliance of over 90 national organizations representing schools, students, health professionals, and communities dedicated to ensuring that the health workforce is trained to meet the varied needs of our entire population. Together, the members of HPNEC advocate for continued support for the health professions and nursing workforce development programs authorized under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). **For fiscal year (FY) 2026, HPNEC encourages the Subcommittee to adopt at least \$1.51 billion for HRSA Titles VII health professions and VIII nursing workforce development programs.**

Health provider shortages have led to widening gaps in care for our most vulnerable patients, including an aging population that requires more health care services. HRSA estimates that 77 million Americans currently live in federally designated primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), 60 million live in dental health HPSAs, and 122 million live in mental health HPSAs. At least 13,300 primary care practitioners, 10,100 dental health practitioners, and 6,200 mental health practitioners to address these shortages and ensure access to care for these communities.¹

The HRSA Title VII and VIII programs successfully recruit, train, and support physicians and physician associates/assistants (PAs), nurses, geriatricians, mental and behavioral health providers, public health practitioners, social workers, and other frontline health care workers. These critical programs — highlighted throughout this statement — educate current and future providers to work across the country in rural and underserved areas, and advance new delivery systems and interprofessional and integrated models of care. Additional investment is needed in the Title VII and Title VIII programs to ensure that our health workforce is equipped to serve the nation's ever-growing needs and prepared for the health care demands of tomorrow.

Health Careers Pipeline Programs — The health careers pipeline programs — including the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), Centers of Excellence (COE), and Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS) — help connect students to health careers by supporting recruitment, education, training, and mentorship opportunities. These pipeline programs support high school, undergraduate, and graduate-level students across various backgrounds, including those from rural and economically or educationally disadvantaged areas. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of such pipeline programs in strengthening students' academic records, improving test scores, and helping disadvantaged students pursue careers in the health professions. Investments in pipeline programs — like those supporting mentorship and

¹ <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas>

training offered through COEs, K-16 health outreach and education programs through HCOP, and scholarships to students who have financial need through SDS — help connect students from different backgrounds, including rural and urban areas, to health careers while also exposing providers to perspectives other than their own. HRSA’s academic year (AY) 2022-2023 data showed that 56% of students remained enrolled or were admitted to a health professions program, or were working in a medically underserved community or primary care setting one year after completing a COE program. Further, 63% of the HCOP high school alumni had been accepted to a bachelor’s program, advancing through the health professions pipeline; and 59% of SDS graduates were working in medically underserved communities.

Similar to the aforementioned pipeline programs, the Faculty Loan Repayment program supports health professionals who are in faculty positions to serve as mentors to the next generation of providers, fostering a workforce composed of varied backgrounds and perspectives.

Primary and Specialty Care Workforce – The Primary Care Medicine Programs fortify our nation’s health care workforce by training future clinicians, teachers, and researchers who practice as pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists, general internal medicine physicians, PAs, and family medicine practitioners. The Primary Care Training and Enhancement (PCTE) program encourages practice in primary care, promotes leadership in health care transformation, and enhances teaching in community-based settings. The PCTE program provided 2.1 million patient encounters in AY 2022-2023.

Further, the Medical Student Education program supports the health care workforce by expanding training for medical students to become primary care clinicians, targeting higher education institutions in states with the highest primary care workforce shortages. Through grants, the program develops partnerships among institutions, federally recognized tribes, and community-based organizations to encourage and train medical students training in the most underserved states to choose residencies and careers in primary care that serve tribal, rural, or medically underserved communities. In AY 2022-2023, the program trained 3,680 students. Of the 806 medical students who graduated, 44% matched to residencies where they trained in HPSAs.

The Pediatric Specialty Loan Repayment Program is also designed to increase access to care for children with special health care and mental health needs by providing loan repayment to pediatric specialists and child mental health professionals who agree to serve in medically underserved areas or HPSAs.

Interdisciplinary, Community-Based Linkages – By assessing the needs of the local communities they serve, Title VII programs help fill gaps in the workforce and increase access to care for all populations. The programs emphasize interprofessional education and training, bringing together knowledge and skills across disciplines to provide effective, efficient, and coordinated care.

Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) support the recruitment and training of future physicians in rural areas, respond to local health needs, and serve as a crucial link between academic training programs and community-based outreach programs. In AY 2022-2023, AHECs trained over 390,000 health care trainees and professionals, including in rural areas, medically underserved communities, and primary care settings.

The Geriatrics Programs integrate geriatrics and primary care to provide coordinated and comprehensive care for older adults. These programs, including the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and the Geriatrics Academic Career Awards programs, offer training across the provider continuum, focusing on interprofessional and team-based care and academic community partnerships to address gaps in health care for older adults. In AY 2022-2023, the Geriatrics Programs provided continuing education to over 400,000 practicing health professionals, patients, caregivers, and other professionals.

The Behavioral Health Workforce Development Programs — including Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET), Mental and Behavioral Health Programs, and Graduate Psychology Education (GPE) — respond to changing delivery systems and models of care and address emerging health issues across rural and urban communities. In AY 2022-2023, 75% of Behavioral Health Workforce Development Program graduates were working in an underserved area following completion of the program.

Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs – Title VIII nursing workforce development programs provide federal support to address all aspects of nursing workforce demands, including education, practice, recruitment, and retention. The focus of these nursing programs is to address the needs of rural and underserved communities, where nursing care is critical to improving health. For example, in AY 2022-2023, the Advanced Nursing Education program (ANE) supported more than 8,000 nursing students. In fact, 72% of ANE recipients worked in underserved areas and 60% work in medically underserved communities and/or rural areas one year after graduation. Further, the Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention program (NEPQR) supported over 10,300 nurses and nursing students, in which over 2,000 participants completed clinical training experiences in high-need and community-based settings. Additionally, as of September 2023, more than three-quarters of Nurse Corps providers were employed in community-based settings and 20% were in rural communities. Other programs under Title VIII help recruit and retain students to the nursing profession by supporting entry into bridge programs and accelerated nursing degree programs, addressing the education of nurses who provide direct care to the country’s aging population, and supporting graduate students to serve as faculty.

Oral Health – The Oral Health Training programs increase access to high-quality dental health services in rural and disadvantaged communities and assist in expanding the dental primary care workforce in general, pediatric, and public health dentistry. The Pre- and Post-doctoral Training, Residency Training, Faculty Development, and Faculty Loan Repayment

programs encourage integrating dentistry into primary care. In AY 2022-2023, Oral Health Training Program contributed to 1.5 million patient encounters in medically underserved communities. Further, 69% of providers who participated in an Oral Health Training Program were working in medically underserved communities after graduating.

Public Health – Public Health Workforce Development programs support education and training in public health and preventive medicine. These programs include the Preventative Medicine Residency Training Program and Public Health Workforce Training Centers. In AY 2022-2023, 43% of Public Health Workforce Development program graduates were working or training in medically underserved communities one year after graduation; 41% in public health or prevention-focused settings; and 12% in state, local, or Tribal health departments.

Health Care Workforce Assessment – Funding for Health Care Workforce Assessment supports the National Center for Health Workforce Analysis, the federal entity that collects, analyzes, and reports on U.S. health workforce data and provides high quality, research-based evidence used to help meet the nation’s health care needs. The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis also oversees nine Health Workforce Research Centers that perform and disseminate research and data analysis on health workforce issues of national importance.

While HPNEC's members acknowledge the increasing demands and fiscal challenges facing appropriators, funding for HRSA's health and nursing workforce development programs is critical in bolstering a workforce that can respond to future health threats and challenges facing all Americans. Therefore, HPNEC encourages the Subcommittee to provide at least \$1.51 billion in the FY 2026 appropriations bill for HRSA's Title VII and VIII programs to continue the nation's investment in our health workforce.