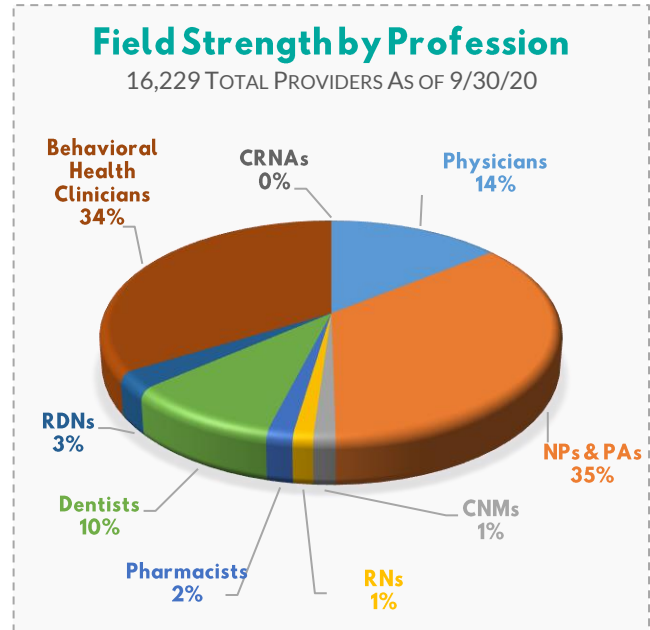


BACKGROUND

The National Health Service Corps (NHSC) program, established in 1972, is designed to incentivize primary care professionals—including physicians, nurse practitioners, dentists, mental and behavioral health professionals, physician assistants, certified nurse-midwives, and dental hygienists—to work in underserved areas in rural and urban communities. In exchange for their service, the program helps to alleviate the burden of student debt through scholarship and loan repayment programs.

Since its founding, the NHSC has placed more than 63,000 providers in underserved communities, with more than 16,000 placements in the last year alone. The NHSC has proven to be a successful, sustainable solution to the shortage of providers in thousands of communities across the United States. More than two-thirds of NHSC clinicians who complete their service obligation continue to practice in a shortage area up to one year later, and a majority continue to practice in a shortage area for more than 10 years after completing their service obligation. Despite this level of service, it would still take an additional 32,592 providers to meet the existing need in all federally designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs).



CURRENT FUNDING

Today, the NHSC is funded at \$310 million through a dedicated trust fund and \$120 million via fiscal year 2021 annual appropriations. The 2021 American Rescue Plan COVID-19 relief package provided a historic one-time investment of \$800 million in the Corps. However, tens of thousands of clinicians are still needed to address existing need within Health Profession Shortage Areas. Historically, only 50% of Loan Repayment applicants and a mere 10% of Scholarship applicants have received awards due to insufficient funding. Collectively, more than a hundred million individuals reside in medically underserved Health Professional Shortage Areas, and yet workforce shortages persist. Furthermore, the impact of COVID-19 has had dire effects in communities already suffering challenges with provider shortages. Without more ongoing funding to support the NHSC, underserved areas across the country who can least afford to deal with additional strains and shortages on their clinical workforce may reach a breaking point. Now more than ever, it is crucial to continue to fund and grow the NHSC to ensure access to care for millions of people living in shortage areas.

Legislative Request

We ask that Congress support legislation in 2022 and beyond that ensures a sustainable future for the National Health Service Corps program and expands the program to address the urgent need for primary care in underserved communities across the country.