

Support the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) in FY24 to Help Address the National Healthcare Workforce Shortage

***DEADLINE: Thursday, March 23rd at 1 PM EST ***

Dear Colleague:

Please join me in supporting funding for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies spending bill.

Nearly 100 million Americans live in communities with too few health care professionals. According to Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), about one fourth of the country lives in an area with too few primary care physicians and half the country lives in a mental health care desert. The country faces a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians over the next decade and data suggests the country will need more than 200,000 new nurses each year until 2026 to fill new positions or replace retiring nurses.

The NHSC program is designed to meet these workforce shortages and address health disparities by enable promising students from diverse backgrounds into health careers in underserved communities. The program enables primary care professionals – including physicians, dentists, nurse practitioners, dentists, mental and behavioral health professionals, physician assistants, certified nurse-midwives, and dental hygienists – to work in underserved areas in urban, rural, and frontier communities. In exchange for their service, the program helps to alleviate the burden of educational debt through scholarship and loan repayment programs.

Since its founding in 1972, the NHSC has proven to be a successful, sustainable solution to our nation's health provider shortages, having placed more than 69,500 primary care professionals in underserved communities. Today, the NHSC has a field strength of over 20,000 clinicians who provide care to more than 21 million people. Despite this level of service, the NHSC's current field strength is but a fraction of the more than 36,800 primary care, mental health, and dental health providers necessary to fully meet the needs of all federally designated health professional shortage areas across the country.

Please join me in urging House Appropriators to include \$175.6 million in funding for the NHSC in fiscal year 2024. The full text of the letter follows below. You can sign on to this letter via Quill. If you have any questions, please contact Tony Tran (Tony.Tran@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

Nanette Barragán

Member of Congress

Letter text below

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you and your colleagues begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide \$175.6 million for the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), which is consistent with the President's FY 2024 Budget Request. We greatly appreciate your work to date in support of the NHSC and look forward to working with you to further strengthen this important program.

As you know, the NHSC has proven to be a successful, sustainable solution to our nation's health provider shortages, having placed more than 66,000 primary care professionals in underserved communities since its inception in 1972. Today, the NHSC has a field strength of nearly 20,000 clinicians who provide care to more than 21 million people across the country. The NHSC's Loan Repayment Program, Scholarship Program, Students-to-Service Program and State Loan Repayment Program have all expanded access to care and enabled thousands of health care clinicians to put their skills to use where it is needed most. In addition to providing care during their NHSC placement, most continue to serve in their community after their commitment has ended. The NHSC has proven to be an effective recruitment and retention tool for underserved communities, and we greatly appreciate the Subcommittee's work expanding this program to additional communities and provider types.

Starting in FY 2018 and continuing in FY 2019 through FY 2021, the NHSC received \$105 million to expand to substance use disorder counselors, which are desperately needed as our nation confronts the opioid epidemic. In addition, in FY 2019 through FY 2021, the NHSC received an additional \$15 million to expand placements within Indian Health Service facilities. Both funding streams helped strengthen primary care delivery in communities of high need across the country. Congress increased the total funding to \$121.6 million in FY 2022 and to \$125.6 million in FY 2023.

We strongly support the continuation of at least \$175.6 million in funding for the NHSC in your FY 2024 bill. By supporting the NHSC, Congress will build upon investments to increase access to quality health care in communities with significant health professional shortages. We thank you for your longstanding support for the NHSC and look forward to working with you on this effort.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,