



NHSC Advocate Talking Points

General:

- Introductions
 - o We're here today on behalf of Association of Clinicians for the Underserved.
 - o Our mission is to increase and support the nation's health care workforce serving underserved communities.
- Paint the picture about workforce challenges and clinicians which can transition to the NHSC program.
- An important part of our work is advocating for National Health Service Corps which encourages clinicians to work in the most underserved communities of the country by providing scholarships and loan forgiveness to those clinicians.
- ****If possible, describe your personal connection to the NHSC (this includes NHSC scholars, participants, recruiters, etc.).***

Justification & Urgency for National Health Service Corps Funding:

- The NHSC is one of the federal government's most successful workforce development investments with over 80% of participants staying in underserved communities at least one year after their mandatory service commitment.
- Over 20,000 providers currently serve over 21 million people in designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) in every U.S. state and territory, and more than 3,500 NHSC scholars are in residency or school preparing to serve.
- HRSA currently estimates that more than 99 million Americans live in primary care health professional shortage areas (HPSAs), and more than 17,000 practitioners are needed to remove the HPSA designation from those areas.
- We are here today because without Congressional action that adequately increases NHSC funding before March 8, the NHSC's field strength will decrease and only a small portion of Loan Repayment and Scholarship applicants will be granted awards.
- Even at the current FY23 funding level, we want to point out that, the program is able to fund fewer than 50% of scholarship and 75% of loan repayment applicants and even those levels far well short of meeting the actual need.
- **We would like your support to ensure that the NHSC does not have to reject the vast majority of clinicians who want to practice in underserved areas.**

Specifically, we are asking you to...

House Meetings

- Please cosponsor H.R. 3080, the *Health Center Service Expansion and Provider Shortage Reduction Act*
- This bill would:
 - o provide an additional \$480 million to the National Health Service Corps' mandatory funding level annually for five years to significantly minimize reduction of the current field strength.

Senate Meetings

- Please cosponsor S. 2840, the *Bipartisan Primary Care and Health Workforce Act*
- This bipartisan bill, which was introduced by Senators Sanders and Marshall, would:
 - o Reauthorize the National Health Service Corps for three years, tripling mandatory funding to \$950 million.
 - o Increased funding is estimated to support 20,000 new loan repayment awards and 2,100 scholarship awards per year to qualified healthcare providers working in underserved urban, rural, and tribal areas.

Optional (if time allows in Senate or House meetings):

- Please cosponsor S. 940/H.R.1711, the *Rural America Health Corps Act*
- This bipartisan and bicameral bill would:
 - o create a new loan repayment program titled "NHSC Rural Provider Loan Repayment Program" that provides loan repayments up to \$200,000 in exchange for 5 years of service in rural communities.
 - o This demonstration program would receive \$50 million annually for the next five years.

NHSC Field Strength Trending in the Wrong Direction

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2023</u>
NHSC Total Award Amount	\$299.6M	\$437.9M	\$699.5M	\$684.7M	\$399.9M
NHSC Field Strength	13,053	16,229	19,984	20,215	18,335
SP (% of eligible applicants funded)	10.7%	11.2%	60.1%	46.7%	6.2%
LRP (% of eligible applicants funded)	45.2%	66.2%	86.2%	71.2%	57.1%

Decreased total award amounts in the NHSC program over the last three years has reduced the NHSC's field strength by nearly 2,000 from FY22 to FY23. The urgent need to extend and bolster funding for the NHSC cannot be overstated as the nation continues to reel from severe clinician and healthcare workforce shortages, particularly in rural and underserved communities that can least afford further strain. If mandatory and discretionary funding levels don't receive increases in FY24 and in the years to come, the NHSC's field strength will continue to decrease and only a small portion of Loan Repayment and Scholarship applicants will be granted awards.

The Consequences of Decreased NHSC Funding

	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY23</u>
NHSC Total Award Amount	\$684.7M	\$399.9M
Total Awards	11,390	7,029
Awards Breakdown	7,705 for Loan Repayment	6,594 for Loan Repayment
	1,224 for Scholarships	228 for Scholarships
	368 for Student to Service Loan Repayment	157 for Student to Service Loan Repayment
	2,093 for State Loan Repayment Program	50 for State Loan Repayment Program

Congress needs to help the NHSC grow beyond its current field strength, but, at the very least, provide enough financial support to maintain the current field strength. **More funding for the Corps directly increases the number of funded applications to help alleviate the shortfall of filled clinician vacancies for underserved communities nationwide.** Unfortunately, a nearly \$285 million decrease in NHSC funding from FY22 to FY23 led to 4,361 (or 61.7%) fewer total awards when compared to the previous year.

*All data was pulled from HRSA Fact Sheets FY14-23: <https://data.hrsa.gov/data/fact-sheets>