

Expand Physician Workforce

Talking Points

- Iowa and the U.S. are facing a critical physician shortage
 - The estimated amount of primary care needs being met in Iowa is 41.69%, with 934,796 Iowans living in primary care health professional shortage areas (HPSAs).
 - Iowa ranks 45th in the nation for healthcare provider-to-patient ratios of active physicians to 100,000 population (AAMC).
 - Rural communities are disproportionately affected by this provider shortage due to geographic maldistribution of primary care providers (PCPs).
 - Currently, 97 of Iowa's 99 counties are either partially or entirely in a designated healthcare provider shortage area (HPSA). To remove the shortage area designations, an additional 174 practitioners are needed in Iowa (HRSA 2024).
- Rural communities face difficulties in recruiting and retaining physicians. One of the most effective recruitment strategies for these communities is loan reimbursement. For Iowa, that is the Rural Primary Care Loan Repayment Program.
 - The program was created as a means of recruiting primary care physicians into rural communities where they can provide the needed direct patient care. Additionally, the program assists with retaining these physicians in the area after their service commitment because they have built a life in the community.
- It is well documented that individuals who complete a residency in a community are more likely to stay there or in the state, and this program follows that same concept.
 - On average, 54.2% of GME trainees remain practicing in the state from which they completed their medical training.
- Iowa utilizes most of the money allocated to this program each year – for 2024 this allocation was \$2.5 million, with the current 2025 budget allocation also at this amount, while full funding of the program is \$4 million. Meaning there are unrealized agreement opportunities due to insufficient funding.
- Meanwhile, specialty and subspecialty fields in medicine are growing in popularity among medical students while primary care seemingly has become a less enticing route for many. This is largely influenced by predicted salary earnings upon completion of training as well as overwhelming debt burdens from tuition loans.
- Providing full funding of the Rural Primary Care Loan Repayment Program will enable HHS to enter into more agreements with primary care providers who will provide necessary care to Iowa's rural and underserved communities – who will have greater access to care and assist in keeping Iowa's workforce healthy.

Legislative Ask

- **Support an increase from \$2.5M to \$4M for full funding of the Iowa Rural Primary Care Loan Repayment Program**
 - Currently \$2.5M of the \$4M full funding is allocated. The program permits \$40,000 in annual loan repayment for up to 5 consecutive years. Full funding would allow for 20 fully funded program agreements annually as opposed to 12 with the current budget.
 - Will incentivize primary care roles and services in rural underserved areas.