



Strengthening Pathways to Health Professions Act

Introduced by Representatives Jill Tokuda (D-HI) and Carol Miller (R-WV)

The *Strengthening Pathways to Health Professions Act* seeks to increase access to federal programs that help grow and strengthen the pipeline of healthcare professionals in primary care, mental and behavioral health, and dental services.

BACKGROUND:

The United States is experiencing a severe shortage of healthcare workers, and growing demand for health care coupled with widespread vacancies and increasing retirements has left millions of patients, especially those in rural and underserved areas, without access to the care they need.

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) supports the health workforce by providing scholarships and loan repayment in return for service in underserved and rural communities. HRSA's health workforce programs help train new people into health professions, enhance providers' skillsets, improve the recruitment of individuals from diverse communities, and connect skilled healthcare providers to communities in need.

Currently, federal income taxes effectively reduce the financial benefit of health professions scholarship and loan repayment awards, as HRSA needs to use appropriated funds for the employer share of taxes and participants need to cover their share of taxes with funds that could be used to satisfy educational debt or expenses.

BILL SUMMARY:

The *Strengthening Pathways to Health Professions Act* would extend the tax-exempt status provided to the National Health Service Corps program to similar HRSA health workforce programs, including the:

- Nurse Corps Scholarship and Loan Repayment Programs,
- Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program,
- Faculty Loan Repayment Program,
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program, and
- Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Loan Repayment Program.

If awards are exempt from federal income tax, more funds would be available for HRSA to make additional or higher awards to increase participation in the programs, particularly in rural and underserved areas. In addition, awardees—which include students, residents, faculty, and providers—would receive the full financial benefit of their awards to pay for tuition, fees, and other educational costs, without the added tax burden.

ENDORSEMENTS:

American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research, American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, American Association of Neuromuscular & Electrodiagnostic Medicine, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, American Counseling Association, American College of Clinical Pharmacy, American College of Physicians, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American College of Osteopathic Pediatricians, Association of American Medical Colleges, Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, Association of Clinicians for the Underserved, America's Essential Hospitals, American Federation of Teachers, American Geriatrics Society, American Health Care Association/National Center for Assisted Living, American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses, American Organization for Nursing Leadership, American Osteopathic Association, American Osteopathic College of Radiology, American Occupational Therapy Association, American Student Dental Association, Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS, Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice, Hawai'i/Pacific Basin Area Health Education Center, Healthcare Association of Hawai'i, Hawai'i State Center for Nursing, Hawai'i Pacific Health, Hawai'i Psychological Association, Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, National AHEC Organization, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association of Community Health Centers, National Association of Hispanic Nurses, National Association of Rural Health Clinics, National Association of Rural Mental Health, National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers, National Nurse-Led Care Consortium, National Rural Health Association, Papa Ola Lōkahi, The Queen's Health Systems, University of Hawai'i System, West Virginia Hospital Association.