



AAMC Diversity and Health Equity Legislative Priorities

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 157 U.S. medical schools accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education; 13 accredited Canadian medical schools; approximately 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and the millions of individuals across academic medicine, including more than 193,000 full-time faculty members, 96,000 medical students, 153,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Following a 2022 merger, the Alliance of Academic Health Centers and the Alliance of Academic Health Centers International broadened the AAMC's U.S. membership and expanded its reach to international academic health centers.

The AAMC is actively implementing a robust, 10-point strategic plan to take systemic action to improve the health of people everywhere. Though all the action plans touch on equity and inclusivity in some way, [Action Plan 4 aims to Increase Significantly the Number of Diverse Medical School Applicants and Matriculants](#). Under this strategic plan, AAMC is leveraging data for change; widening the pathway to medicine for Black, African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, and first-generation students; and addressing academic climate and culture for equity. This initiative builds on longstanding AAMC efforts to develop a more diverse physician workforce to provide equitable, high-quality, compassionate, and culturally responsive care to all patients and communities.

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Title VII – [AAMC supports doubling funding](#) for a broad range of HRSA workforce development and diversity pathway programs to help shape the workforce to meet patient needs. The HRSA Title VII diversity programs include:

- Health Career Opportunity Program (HCOP), K-16 diversity pathway programs
- Centers of Excellence (COE), student support and minority health training programs at health professions institutions
- Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students (SDS), scholarships for minority and/or disadvantaged health professions students
- Faculty Loan Repayment (FLRP), loan repayment program for minority health professions faculty to serve as mentors

Unfortunately, the HRSA Title VII diversity programs have been flat funded for two decades (\$115 million in 2002, compared to \$106 million for 2023). Despite being chronically underfunded, the HRSA Title VII diversity programs reach over 12,000 students annually; however, only 20 schools have HCOP grants and only 17 have COE grants — down from 80 HCOP programs and 34 COE programs in 2005 before the programs' funding was cut substantially.

Graduate Medical Education (GME) – The AAMC currently projects a nationwide shortage of up to 124,000 physicians by 2034, including shortages of primary care, non-primary care, and specialty physicians; if marginalized minority populations, people living in rural communities, and people without health insurance had the same health care use patterns as populations with fewer barriers to access, up to an additional 180,400 physicians would be needed right now. While medical schools continue to increase enrollment, this will not be sufficient to address projected workforce shortages without commensurate increases in GME, also known as medical residency training. The AAMC strongly supports the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2023 (H.R. 2389), sponsored by Reps. Terri Sewell (D-AL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), which would gradually add 14,000 new Medicare-supported GME positions over seven years. These positions would be strategically targeted at a wide variety of teaching hospitals, including those affiliated with HBCU medical schools, which will help strengthen and diversify the health care workforce and improve access to care for patients, families, and communities across the country. While increasing GME is critical to expanding the workforce and creating capacity to train more residents from diverse backgrounds, intervention is needed earlier in the education continuum to substantially increase workforce diversity.

“Pathway to Practice” – The AAMC supports the HHS Pathway to Practice program originally included in the Build Back Better Act (H.R. 5376, Sections 137401-137404) in the 117th Congress. The Pathway to Practice program starts earlier in the medical education pathway with scholarships for medical and postbaccalaureate students from communities that are disadvantaged and underrepresented in the physician workforce. Importantly, the Pathway to Practice program would prioritize applicants that attended HBCUs or MSIs, as well as those who participated in certain HRSA diversity pathway programs. The program would also exempt residency positions with Pathway participants from the Medicare caps on GME support at teaching hospitals that meet certain health equity and diversity-focused criteria.

Expanding Medical Schools at Minority Servicing Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and in Underserved Communities – The AAMC supports the Expanding Medical Education Act, which would authorize HRSA grants to establish or expand medical schools, including regional branch campuses, and would prioritize HBCUs and MSIs or those that propose to establish or expand schools in medically underserved communities or areas with shortages of health professionals where no such schools exist. An increase of diverse physicians will help more diverse patients establish trusted, coveted physician-patient relationships and will hopefully lead to better clinical outcomes.

Community College Pathway – Community colleges are an important bridge to the health professions for all students. Roughly one third of recent applicants to MD medical schools and almost 3 in 10 medical students had ever attended a community college. Among those medical students with a community college background, roughly one third are from racial and ethnic or socioeconomic groups underrepresented in medicine, whereas roughly one quarter of medical students with no community college background are from such groups underrepresented in medicine. The AAMC supports the National Medical Corps Act sponsored by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) to create a structured pathway program that taps into the diversity of America’s community colleges to support and increase the diversity and the number of physicians.

Health Equity – The AAMC and the new AAMC Center for Health Justice are working to advance health equity infrastructure (e.g., community grants and improving data collection), maternal health, and other priority issues such patient access, telehealth, non-discrimination, and mental health. Additionally, the AAMC supports the Health Equity and Accountability Act, a comprehensive and strategic legislative roadmap that aims to eliminate racial and ethnic health inequities sponsored by the Congressional Tri-Caucus and led this Congress by Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

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