



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

September 22, 2015

Dear Colleague,

For years, studies have concluded that our nation is facing an increasingly serious shortage of both primary care and specialist physicians. The Association for American Medical Colleges estimates that in the next decade, there will be a shortage of up to 90,000 physicians, of which close to 30,000 will be primary care doctors and 60,000 will be medical specialists.

Our nation needs a robust physician workforce to care for a growing, aging population. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that the primary care physician supply will increase by only 8 percent between 2010 and 2020. At the same time, the Census Bureau projects that the population with the greatest healthcare needs – Americans over 65 years old – will almost double by 2050.

One way to tackle this challenge is to increase the number of residency “slots” supported by Medicare. These physician training programs, based in our nation’s numerous teaching hospitals, would help alleviate the pain of the workforce shortages that are already affecting patients in some states. But first, Congress needs to increase the cap set in 1997 on the number of residents that Medicare would support at each hospital.

On April 30, we introduced S.1148, the *Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2015* to expand the number of Medicare-supported residencies by 15,000 over five years, with half of the available slots dedicated to shortage specialties. We also worked to ensure that these new positions were distributed to new medical programs and programs that provide care to veterans. Finally, this bill directs the National Health Workforce Commission to submit a report to Congress on the physician workforce by 2018, so we can make more effective decisions going forward.

We believe this legislation is a critical first step towards ensuring an adequate supply of physicians. If you would like to become a cosponsor, or for more information, please contact Corey Malmgren in Senator Bill Nelson’s office at corey_malmgren@billnelson.senate.gov. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson" with a long, sweeping underline.

Bill Nelson