



## **Pennsylvania's Healthcare Workforce Shortage**

**Pennsylvania's health care workforce shortage is one of the most severe in the US:**

- Worst Registered Nurse (RN) shortfall in the US with additional 20,345 needed.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> worst mental health professional shortage in the US with a 6,330 shortfall.
- Nursing support staff shortage of 273,711

This critical healthcare workforce shortage results in double digit vacancies in our hospitals, nursing homes, community health centers, and private practices, compromising the health and mental health care in the Commonwealth.

**There are time-tested remedies for the healthcare workforce shortages:**

- Increase the number of students by providing grants to healthcare profession training schools to increase enrollment and clinical training sites for all healthcare workforce shortage positions, including educational remediation programs so students can excel in these schools and in the licensure/certification exams. (Community Colleges will be critical in meeting this need.)
- Increase the supply of Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), Licensed Professional Nurses (LPNs), Doulas, and Community Health Workers (CHWs) by providing adequate reimbursement for these positions through state-funded programs and the PA Insurance Department. (See PHFC's Policy Briefs on Maternal and Child Health and Skilled Nursing Facilities' Workforce)
- Ensure network adequacy and reimbursement for Doulas, CHWs, mobile crisis teams, direct care workers, mental health stabilization centers, mental health and substance abuse professionals, school nurses, and primary health providers (see PHFC's Policy Briefs on Maternal and Child Health and Behavioral Health 988).
- Shorten, condense, and modernize the educational, licensure, and certification period and procedures to produce more healthcare staff in a shorter period.

## Pennsylvania Health Funders Collaborative

---

- Require commercial and Medical Assistance behavioral health MCOs that have inadequate behavioral health provider networks to grow their network by:
  - 1) hiring Masters in Social Work and Master's in Education graduates who need supervised hours to become licensed and provide those supervised hours; and
  - 2) addressing other needs for paid preceptors and supervisors who are needed to help graduates meet healthcare licensure requirements.
- Take all appropriate steps to allow maximum use of telehealth to maximize the delivery of health care in healthcare shortage services.
- Provide increased loans and scholarships for positions in need.
- To minimize student debt and guarantee job placements, foster private-public partnerships with healthcare professional schools, hospitals, nursing facilities and other healthcare providers to jointly interview and accept students for future employment, student work opportunities, stipends, loans, and grants.
- Provide subsidized childcare vouchers for education of students in training programs for critical healthcare worker shortages.
- Increase loan forgiveness programs for healthcare workforce graduates who work in areas with shortage for those positions.
- Help schools set up student support behavioral health services at the school, which serve Medical Assistance, commercially insured, and those students whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) calls for such services (e.g., this helped Woodland Hills School save \$3.3 million a year).
- Create a financing model for community organizations to provide mental health early intervention and wellness services and supports to youth (e.g., drop-in centers and after school programs) to prevent the need for mental health treatment as they age. (potential funding sources include County Block Grants, MCO reinvestment funds, and the state budget).
- Implement the other workforce recommendations in PHFC's Behavioral Health, Maternal and Child Health, and Skilled Nursing Facility policy briefs.