

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2003

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Primary Care Physician Reentry Act (H.R. 4234)

Help Combat America's Shortage of Primary Care Physicians & Fill Shortages at Veterans Medical Centers, Community Health Centers & School Based Health Clinics

Dear Colleague:

The shortage of primary care physicians will reach 45,000 by the year 2020 and fewer than 20 percent of medical students are choosing to enter primary care medicine. At the same time, we expect approximately 250,000 physicians will retire by 2020 and increasing numbers of physicians want to take a voluntary leave of absence from clinical practice for a variety of reasons – to take care of a young child or aging parent, to pursue a career in administration or academia, or simply to avoid the headaches that often come with private practice.

The shortage of primary care providers is particularly acute for some of our most vulnerable populations, including veterans and children. This issue came to the fore in 2014 when news broke of delays in care within our veterans healthcare system. According to an audit of VA medical centers and outpatient facilities after the scandal, a lack of doctors and nurse practitioners drove many of the patient delays.

Physicians who want to return to clinical practice after a period of inactivity often experience frustrating difficulties in re-entering the system: a lack of information about the process and requirements for re-entry because credentialing and continuing medical education vary across states; duplicative and confusing paperwork; high financial costs for re-entry programs and getting credentialed; lack of an assessment process and tools to measure competency of re-entering physicians; and high costs of malpractice insurance.

The Primary Care Physician Reentry Act, H.R. 4234, would help alleviate the country's shortage of family physicians, primary care providers and pediatricians by providing training and financial assistance to doctors returning to medical practice in exchange for their service as a public health care provider. H.R. 4234 would create a grant program for qualified medical institutions, such as medical schools, hospitals and non-profit organizations, to establish or expand physician re-entry programs.

Grantees would create a one-stop-shop for re-entering physicians that includes a streamlined process for credentialing and continuing medical education as well as funding to assist with credentialing fees, loan repayment and salaries. In return for this assistance, physicians must provide a minimum of two years of service at a community health center, VA medical center, or school-based health center. Participating physicians would be able to practice on a full or part-time basis and would be covered under the Federal Tort Claims Act which provides physicians with medical liability protection.

To co-sponsor this bill or to receive more information, please contact Dvora Lovinger at dvora.lovinger@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

H.R. 4234 is supported by American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians, American Osteopathic Association, Federation of State Medical Boards and School-Based Health Alliance.