

Statement for the Record
Supporting Tomorrow's Health Providers
House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health

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September 14, 2017

Chairman Burgess, Ranking Member Green, Members of the Committee. This hearing provides an opportunity to highlight an issue I am passionate about and have a special interest in, as it is of particular importance to California's Central Valley and the community I represent. I thank you for the opportunity to come before the committee.

We have several important healthcare reauthorization deadlines that Congress must act on immediately. One of these deadlines, which I have been working tirelessly to raise awareness about, is the expiration of the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program. This program was created in 2010 to address the shortage of primary care physicians in rural and medically underserved communities. As such, it is a critical source of training for physicians in rural and underserved areas, and essential to addressing primary care shortages across the nation. THCGME must be re-authorized and expanded at robust levels before September 30, 2017. Otherwise, the program will be unable to continue to serve its vital purpose of training primary care physicians in the highest-need areas.

I have been working with the Committee, and in particular Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, to introduce legislation that reauthorizes THCGME for three years and at higher funding levels than were reauthorized in the most recent two-year extension (MACRA, P.L. 114-10). This increased funding and longer extension are necessary for the program to function as it was intended and meet our primary care physician needs. That is why I am an original cosponsor of H.R. 3394, the Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education Extension Act of 2017, which currently has 66 bipartisan cosponsors.

Furthermore, I introduced my own bill to expand this program. H.R. 3451, the Creating Additional Residency Expansion (CARE) Act, provides more expansion funding, specifically creates new centers for residency programs, and allows existing programs to expand. This will allow more Teaching Health Centers to start training residents. My community needs this bill to become law. Expanding the THCGME program is a critical piece to addressing the overall physician and specialty care shortage in California's Central Valley.

With the deadline to reauthorize fast approaching, I urge Members of the Committee and House Leadership to act quickly to extend the THCGME program so that it can continue to meet the needs of our nation's underserved communities.