

Expanding Medical Education Act

Senators Tim Kaine and Alex Padilla

Communities of color and those living in rural and underserved areas face significant barriers to health care, including shortages of culturally competent providers. [Research shows](#) that the two most influential factors for where physicians choose to practice medicine are where they are from and where they complete their residency. Unfortunately, in many communities of color and rural areas, there are few pathways to enter the medical profession.

While medical school enrollment has approached [100,000 students](#) for the first time, there still remains a dire shortage of health care professionals in rural and underserved areas. Only [15 percent](#) of medical students report intent in pursuing a career in a rural setting, while [66 percent](#) of primary care health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) are located in rural settings. Additionally, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students face several barriers to matriculate and graduate from medical school. [For example](#), less than 6 percent of physicians identify as Black, despite making up almost 14 percent of the U.S. population, and nearly 7 percent of physicians identify as Hispanic, despite making up almost 20 percent of the [U.S. population](#). A dearth of diverse medical providers exacerbates barriers to care and the disparities in health outcomes that communities of color experience.

The *Expanding Medical Education Act* aims to tackle the lack of representation of rural students, underserved students, and students of color in the physician pipeline by encouraging the recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The bill would provide grants through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to colleges and universities to establish or expand allopathic (M.D. granting) or osteopathic (D.O. granting) medical schools in underserved areas or at minority-serving institutions (MSIs), including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Specifically, the *Expanding Medical Education Act*:

- Prioritizes grants to institutions of higher education that –
 - Propose to use the funds to establish a medical school or branch campus in an area in which no other such school is based and is a medically underserved community or health professional shortage area and
 - Are MSIs, including HBCUs.
- Allows grant funds to be used for:
 - Planning and construction of a medical school in an area in which no other school is based or a branch campus;
 - Activities to meet the criteria for accreditation for a school of medicine;
 - Hiring diverse faculty and other staff;
 - Recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, students from rural and underserved areas, students with low incomes, and first-generation college students;
 - Supporting educational programs; and
 - Modernizing and expanding infrastructure.

- Requires reporting to Congress on the activities conducted under the grants and associated outcomes.

Supporting Organizations: National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), California Hospital Association, Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), Ochsner Health, Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU)