



To Whom It May Concern:

Dedicated efforts to mitigate the health care workforce shortage in New Hampshire began more than six years ago when a broad stakeholder group came together to try to move the workforce crisis to the top of the legislative agenda. Scores of organizations signed on as members of the New Hampshire Health Care Workforce Coalition in 2018 and worked collaboratively to develop policy and budget proposals for 2019 that would help to lift all ships, rather than pit one health care provider group against another.

The critical need to address the workforce shortage still exists, and we see this continued effort as an opportunity to invest in success. There have been great strides made since 2019 to move New Hampshire forward, the most historic and meaningful of which are the Medicaid reimbursement rate increases enacted in the 2023 State operating budget. But it is clear that development of the health care workforce pipeline still needs to be addressed. Members of the New Hampshire Health Care Workforce Coalition have agreed with the premise that 2023 was the year for Medicaid rate increases, and 2024 is the year for completing the work with robust pipeline development.

We emphasized in 2019, and we do again now, that the workforce shortage is slowing the state's economy and jeopardizing the ability of our businesses (both profit and not-for-profit) to thrive, fulfill their missions, and serve those in need. More recently, we have seen that the continuing workforce shortage is driving up health care costs for individuals and businesses. Health care providers are increasingly forced to hire contract workers and offer sign-on bonuses and other enticements to attract and retain workers.

Vacancies across Granite State health care organizations are still significant. The latest New Hampshire Hospital Association vacancy report from October 2023 shows a vacancy rate for all hospital positions of 15.5% of hospitals reporting, up 8.6% from 6.9% in October 2019. The state's 10 community mental health centers (CMHCs) currently have 310 clinical vacancies; their vacancy rate has grown by 9.8% in the past 24 months. Community health centers (CHCs) also report significant staff vacancies. The clinical vacancies across the health care sector include physicians (MDs or DOs), family practice, internal medicine, pediatricians, obstetricians-gynecologists, psychiatrists, nurse practitioners (NPs), psychiatric NPs, certified nurse midwives, and physician assistants (PAs). These clinicians provide integrated behavioral health, substance use disorder treatment, and primary care.

A summary of the legislative package being offered in 2024 is attached, with descriptions of the intent, structure, and proposed funding for each of these pipeline investments:

- Family Medicine Residency Program in the North Country
- Community Health Worker Voluntary Certification and Deployment
- Area Health Education Center Workforce Pipeline Development
- Expansion of the State Loan Repayment Program
- National Marketing Campaign Support
- Funding for Nurse Practitioner, Nursing Student, and other Supervisors (Preceptors) and Financial Support for Host Organizations
- Sector Partnership Initiative
- New Hampshire Needs Caregivers
- Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire

There are also several other statutory amendments proposed:

- Allows a licensed nursing assistant who has been employed as a licensed nursing assistant for one full year to apply for a certificate of medication administration
- Defines case management services under the Home Health Care Provider and Individual Home Care Services Providers statutes
- Extends the Legislative Commission on the Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce

The legislative proposal assumes the required appropriations will be drawn from reallocations of Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). In total, the proposal includes spending of less than \$35 million, which is about 4/10 of one percent of the \$1.1 billion in federal relief funds. The reallocation approach assumes: The federal deadlines to encumber funds is December 31, 2024, and the State will undertake a reallocation of previously allocated funds that will not be spent by December 31, 2024. The proposal envisions that the appropriations will be encumbered by October 1, 2024, through contracts with the Department of Health and Human Services, and spent by December 31, 2026.

We hope that you will support this systematic approach to addressing our health care workforce crisis. As of today, the health care workforce pipeline development bill – SB 403, relative to health care workforce investments – is supported by the following organizations:

Alzheimer’s Association, Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter

Ascentria Care Alliance

Bi-State Primary Care Association

Center for Life Management

Community Partners

Community Support Network, Inc.

Disability Rights Center - New Hampshire
Granite State Home Health & Hospice Association
Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce
Greater Nashua Mental Health Center
Headrest
HealthForce New Hampshire
Lakes Region Mental Health Center
LeadingAge Maine & New Hampshire
Legislative Commission on the Interdisciplinary Primary Care Workforce
Meals on Wheels New Hampshire
Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester
Monadnock Family Services
The Moore Center
NAMI-New Hampshire
Nashua Chamber of Commerce
Nashua Division of Public Health and Community Services
National Association of Social Workers, New Hampshire Chapter
New Futures
New Hampshire Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselors Association
New Hampshire Area Health Education Center (AHEC)
New Hampshire Association of Nurse Anesthesiology
New Hampshire Association of Residential Care Homes
New Hampshire Community Behavioral Health Association
New Hampshire Dental Hygienists' Association
New Hampshire Health Care Association

New Hampshire Hospital Association
New Hampshire Hunger Solutions
New Hampshire Medical Society
New Hampshire Nurse Practitioner Association
New Hampshire Nurses Association
New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition
New Hampshire Public Health Association
Northern Human Services
Riverbend Community Mental Health
Rivier University, Division of Nursing and Health Professions
RS Consulting, LLC.
Seacoast Mental Health Center
Southern New Hampshire AHEC
St. Joseph School of Nursing
University of New Hampshire System
Waypoint
West Central Behavioral Health