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## **Ask: Please cosponsor the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act (S.348/H.R.1763)**

*House Sponsors: Terri Sewell (D-AL), John Katko (R-NY), Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM), Rodney Davis (R-IL)*  
*Senate Sponsors: Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Sen. John Boozman (R-AR), Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY)*

### **What Does the Bill Do?**

The bipartisan bill increases the limit for Medicare-supported resident training slots at qualifying hospitals, addressing an outdated 1997 policy that put a cap on residency slots. It will increase the total number of slots by 15,000 between fiscal years 2021 and 2025. Half of these slots will be used for training in a shortage specialty residency program. The bill also requires a GAO study on strategies for increasing the number of health professionals in rural, lower income, and underrepresented minority communities.

The legislation outlines a hierarchy for distributing the new slots, prioritizing teaching hospitals that are training residents in excess of their cap, those in states with newly opened medical schools, and those that emphasize training physicians in community-based or outpatient hospital settings.

**COST:** Medicare currently pays over \$10B per year for graduate medical education. The Association of American Medical Colleges “back of the envelope” estimate is that the proposed legislation would add an additional cost \$10B over 10 years.

### **Why Do We Need the Bill?**

The latest projections from the Association of American Medical Colleges indicate a shortfall of between 46,900 and 121,900 physicians by 2032.<sup>1</sup> By 2035, cardiothoracic surgeons would have to increase their caseload by an unfeasible 121 percent to meet demand.<sup>2</sup> The cardiothoracic surgeon workforce is aging along with the population. 10,000 Americans turn 65 every day, and this older population will drive an increasing demand for cardiothoracic surgery care as surgeons retire.

Medical school enrollment is growing but the number of residency positions is capped. Many graduates will have no place to finish their required training. In 2017, all 84 Thoracic Surgery residency slots were filled. Increased funding for Graduate Medical Education (GME) will help protect patient access to care.

**Please see a list of cosponsors on the back of this sheet.**

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<sup>1</sup> “New Findings Confirm Predictions on Physician Shortage.”

<https://news.aamc.org/press-releases/article/2019-workforce-projections-update/>

<sup>2</sup> Moffatt-Bruce S, Crestanello J, Way DP, Williams TE. Providing cardiothoracic services in 2035: signs of trouble ahead. *J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg.* 2018; 155:824-9.

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