

IOWA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

WORKFORCE

IMPROVING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN IOWA

BACKGROUND

Across Iowa, hospitals are facing critical health care workforce shortages. Hospitals are struggling to recruit, hire and maintain medical professionals and staff in nearly every service and specialty. The General Assembly should make every effort to ensure hospitals have resources available, especially during this time of dire need and urgency. This can be done by:

- **Expanding training programs** statewide.
- **Increasing reimbursement** for Iowa providers to ensure Iowa is competitive in recruiting and retaining talent.
- **Investing in workforce initiatives** that provide incentives to Iowa health care professionals.
- **Loosening restrictions** that prohibit health care professionals from easily engaging in Iowa's workforce.

Recruitment and retention

- **Expand training programs:** Although the General Assembly has worked over the past few years to increase rural access to training, more work needs to be done. Offering state subsidies and other incentives to increase Iowa's workforce training programs can ensure more Iowans are educated and enter the medical professional workforce.
- **Increase reimbursement to medical professionals:** The General Assembly should increase reimbursements to Iowa providers to ensure competitive wages and salaries can be paid to medical professionals.
 - Iowa is in the lower tier for reimbursement for all providers across government-funded programs like Medicare and Medicaid.
 - Increasing reimbursement for telehealth will bolster the reimbursement provided to Iowa medical professionals.
- **Invest in workforce initiatives:** The General Assembly should continue to develop programs that create incentives for medical professionals to practice, live and grow in Iowa. Government programs, such as loan repayment and forgiveness incentives, should be continually funded to ensure this tool is available for recruitment and retention. The state also should invest in scholarship programs and tax incentives to continue to bolster the ability to recruit and retain medical talent in Iowa.
- **Reduce administrative barriers:** During the pandemic, Iowa has recognized the many barriers that exist to stifle workforce in Iowa. Although some of these barriers have been temporarily lifted during the pandemic, these administrative burdens will be restored when the pandemic ends. Iowa should continue to simplify entry into the workforce by closely examining barriers for licensure, education, and the practice of medicine and nursing.

The General Assembly should continue to develop and fund programs that demonstrate improved recruitment and retention for medical professionals in Iowa.

WORKFORCE PRINCIPLES

BACKGROUND

Besides these legislative requests, the Iowa Hospital Association has developed workforce principles the Iowa General Assembly should consider as it works to ensure Iowa hospitals can recruit and retain a health care workforce to sustain Iowa's high-quality health care system.

Access to care

- IHA supports legislative proposals that **maintain access to care and eliminate health care disparities** in urban and rural communities and with underserved populations.
- IHA supports state policies that **ensure access to quality health care in Iowa and create an attractive environment** to recruit and retain quality health care workers.
- IHA supports **updated payment policies** that cover the cost of providing care, reflect the challenges with providing care in rural areas and allow hospitals to maintain a healthy workforce.

Recruitment and retention

- IHA supports **workforce initiatives that ensure Iowa is a top recruiter** of medical talent and create an environment in which medical professionals want to work and thrive.
 - IHA supports efforts to **increase diversity in the health care workforce** to be more reflective of the communities served.
 - **IHA does not support legislative efforts that have a discriminatory effect** and make it more difficult to recruit and retain health care professionals.
- Iowa providers compete with other states to recruit physicians. To make Iowa hospitals more competitive with other states, IHA supports **tort reform legislation that places a hard cap on noneconomic damages**.
- At the federal level, IHA supports:
 - Efforts to **increase the number of Medicare-funded residency slots** to expand training opportunities in rural areas and help address health professional shortages.
 - Legislation to **extend and expand the Conrad State 30 J-1 visa waiver program** to increase the health care workforce.

Provider patient relationship

- IHA supports **individual medical decisions in accordance with the standard of medical care**. Legislative proposals should not interfere with the provider/patient relationship.