

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-204
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, 419
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell, and Leader Schumer,

Thank you for your continued leadership in the face of the Coronavirus crisis. We write today to request that you include the bipartisan Stopping Doctor Shortages Act (H.R. 4607), in any upcoming COVID-19 relief package.

The bill fixes a disparity in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program for physicians in California and Texas who treat patients in private, nonprofit community hospitals. In 2008, a Department of Education regulation requiring that physicians be directly employed by the nonprofit institution for which they work clashed with California and Texas state laws that prohibit the employment of physicians by private, non-physician, corporate entities. As a result, the regulation unintentionally excluded these physicians from the program. The error steers young medical professionals away from service in rural and underserved areas of both of our states – now, more than ever when we need doctors and nurses to treat patients exposed to COVID-19, this is simply unacceptable.

Physician shortages in California and Texas are already dire. California faces a projected shortage of 4100 primary care physicians over the next decade,¹ and 33 counties in Texas have no doctor.² At this moment, our country's medical professionals are taking on the toughest, most dangerous challenge they will face in their entire career. Their jobs are made harder by rural and underserved systems that are already overburdened and understaffed. Now is the time to use every tool at our disposal to close the gaps and end physician shortages.

¹ <https://futurehealthworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ExecutiveSummaryFinalReportCFHWC.pdf>

² <https://www.texasobserver.org/driving-my-life-away/>

Our frontline medical professionals are giving everything they have to protect Americans from COVID-19. They're working long hours in dangerous conditions, often with limited personal protective equipment and no expectation that they'll be able to stop soon. They know have a job to do – as long as there are patients to care for, they won't leave the job half-finished. It's time Congress afforded them the same courtesy.

This program is already in dire straits – less than one percent of applicants have actually made it through enough bureaucratic red tape to receive PSLF. In exchange for a career of public service, we're saddling young Americans with a lifetime of unexpected student debt. We can cut through one ribbon of that red tape right now and extend a lifeline to the heroes who are putting their lives on the line for us.

Given the urgent need for medical professionals in rural and underserved areas across the country, we urge you to include the Stopping Doctor Shortages Act in the next COVID-19 relief package. There is no reason that California and Texas should be singled out to be excluded from this program, and there is no reason that we should have to wait any longer for parity in this time of crisis. Thank you again for your leadership in the first three stages of Congress's response to COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Josh Harder
United States
Representative (CA-10)



Joaquin Castro
United States
Representative (TX-20)



Paul Cook
United States Representative
(CA-8)

Colin Allred
United States Representative (TX-32)

Karen Bass
United States Representative (CA-37)

Ami Bera
United States Representative (CA-7)

Julia Brownley
United States Representative (CA-26)

Salud Carbajal
United States Representative (CA-24)

Judy Chu
United States Representative (CA-27)

Gil Cisneros
United States Representative (CA-39)

Lou Correa
United States Representative (CA-46)

Jim Costa
United States Representative (CA-16)

T.J. Cox
United States Representative (CA-21)

Veronica Escobar
United States Representative (TX-16)

Anna G. Eshoo
United States Representative (CA-18)

Lizzie Fletcher
United States Representative (TX-7)

John Garamendi
United States Representative (CA-3)

Sylvia Garcia
United States Representative (TX-29)

Louie Gohmert
United States Representative (TX-1)

Jimmy Gomez
United States Representative (CA-34)

Vicente Gonzalez
United States Representative (TX-15)

Jared Huffman
United States Representative (CA-2)

Will Hurd
United States Representative (TX-23)

Sheila Jackson Lee
United States Representative (TX-18)

Ro Khanna
United States Representative (CA-17)

Barbara Lee
United States Representative (CA-13)

Ted Lieu
United States Representative (CA-33)

Zoe Lofgren
United States Representative (CA-19)

Alan Lowenthal
United States Representative (CA-47)

Jerry McNerney
United States Representative (CA-9)

Grace Napolitano
United States Representative (CA-32)

Jimmy Panetta
United States Representative (CA-20)

Scott Peters
United States Representative (CA-52)

Katie Porter
United States Representative (CA-45)

Harley Rouda
United States Representative (CA-48)

Lucille Roybal-Allard
United States Representative (CA-40)

Linda T. Sánchez
United States Representative (CA-38)

Adam Schiff
United States Representative (CA-28)

Eric Swalwell
United States Representative (CA-15)

Mike Thompson
United States Representative (CA-5)

Juan Vargas
United States Representative (CA-51)

Mark Veasey
United States Representative (TX-33)

Jackie Speier
United States Representative (CA-14)