

PHYSICAL THERAPIST WORKFORCE AND PATIENT ACCESS ACT (H.R. 1252/S. 602)

POSITION

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) strongly supports the *Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act of 2013* (H.R. 1252/S. 602), legislation that would authorize physical therapists to participate in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) Loan Repayment Program. On March 19, 2013, H.R. 1252 was introduced by Representatives John Shimkus (R-IL) and Diana DeGette (D-CO), and S. 602 was introduced by Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Roger Wicker (R-MS).

INCREASED ACCESS TO PHYSICAL THERAPY

The NHSC addresses the health needs of more than 10 million individuals at 14,000 sites across the nation. H.R. 1252/S. 602 would ensure that patients receive access to physical therapy services to meet the needs of underserved areas. As essential members of the health care team, physical therapists play an important role in management of chronic diseases and conditions such as diabetes, stroke and obesity, and their impact on an individual's quality of life and ability to work in his or her community.

10 million:

The number of Americans served by the National Health Service Corps

The NHSC has not only served as a pipeline for providers in underserved areas, but has successfully retained many of its providers to continue to serve in the areas of the country that need it most. In 2012, the NHSC had an 82% retention rate for providers within the program to continue to provide improved patient access to care. Currently there is no rehabilitative care component within the NHSC, a piece that could greatly complement the current program to promote health across the continuum of care.

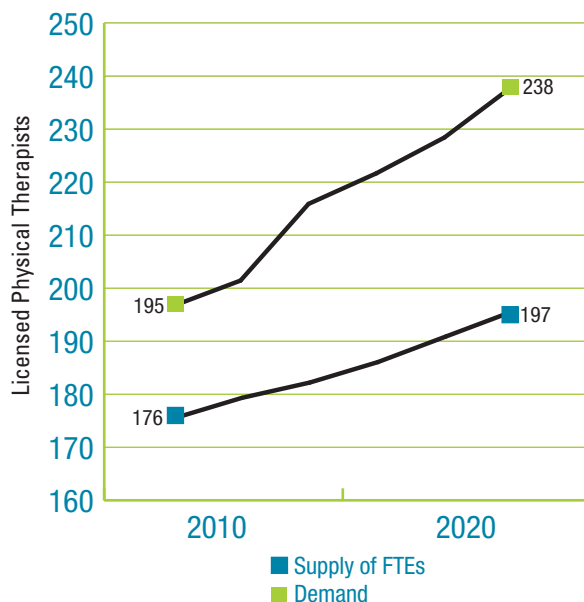
In addition to the care they provide, physical therapists also can alleviate the demands on other primary care providers by serving as an entry point to the health care system for many individuals with chronic diseases and conditions, maximizing care to the entire population in NHSC communities.

MEETING THE WORKFORCE NEEDS OF UNDERSERVED AREAS

The US Department of Labor indicates that employment of physical therapists is expected to "grow faster than the average" of all occupations through 2020. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "...the demand for physical therapists should continue to rise as growth in the number of individuals with disabilities or limited function spurs demand for therapy services." The inclusion of physical therapists in the NHSC Loan Repayment Program will help to ensure that these services are available to underserved communities. Based on current trends in the physical therapist workforce, the shortage of physical therapists could potentially reach over 40,000 in the United States by 2020. With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), this number will increase based on the needs of newly insured individuals.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST SUPPLY AND DEMAND

All number in thousands



American Physical Therapy Association

1111 North Fairfax Street • Alexandria, Virginia 22314-1488
800/999-2782 • www.apta.org

Co-sponsor H.R. 1252/S. 602 Today!

For additional information, contact the American Physical Therapy Association's Government Affairs Department at 703/706-8533 or advocacy@apta.org.