

NEWS RELEASE

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Legislation to Increase Access to Physical Therapist Services for Patients in Underserved Communities

ALEXANDRIA, VA, March 20, 2013 — The National Health Services Corps (NHSC) serves as a lifeline to millions of patients living in rural and underserved communities. The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) strongly supports the ***Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act of 2013 (HR 1252/S602)***, legislation introduced today in Congress that will authorize physical therapists to participate in the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program and add for the first time to the Corps a component to provide for rehabilitative care. HR 1252 was introduced by Reps John Shimkus (R-IL) and Diana DeGette (D-CO); S602 was introduced by Sens Jon Tester (D-MT) and Roger Wicker (R-MS).

NHSC addresses the health needs of over 10 million underserved individuals across the nation. HR 1252/S602 would ensure that patients in rural and underserved urban areas receive better access to the care, both preventive and rehabilitative, physical therapists can provide. Physical therapists are essential members of the health care team; they play an important role in management of chronic diseases and conditions such as diabetes, stroke, and obesity and the impact these conditions have on an individual's quality of life and ability to work. PTs help to maximize care in NHSC communities and alleviate demands on other primary care providers by serving as a patient entry point to the health care system.

"We are pleased to see the introduction of this legislation as it addresses the growing demand for physical therapists in the near future and provides greater patient access to necessary rehabilitation in underserved communities across the country," said APTA President Paul A. Rockar Jr, PT, DPT, MS. "This legislation will make it easier for students to choose the physical therapy profession and seek careers in communities that need them."

Not only has NHSC served as a pipeline for providers to underserved areas, it also has had an excellent retention record (85% last year). Many of the health care professionals who participated in the program have stayed and continued to serve in the areas of the country that need it most.

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“Getting access to appropriate and timely care often can be a challenge in rural and underserved communities. This bipartisan legislation recognizes the important role physical therapists play in our health delivery system and gives their profession the same access to loan repayment program benefits many other health professionals already enjoy” Rep Shimkus said.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 85,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat and find a physical therapist in your area at www.MoveForwardPT.com. Consumers are encouraged to follow us on Twitter ([@MoveForwardPT](https://twitter.com/MoveForwardPT)) and [Facebook](#).

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