



Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Field Roundtable Meeting

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Focus on Graduate Medical Education (GME) Positions

Chairman Sanders, we are extremely proud of our accomplishments and track record. Morehouse School of Medicine and the other HBCU medical schools have consistently been ranked at the top or near the top of all medical schools in social mission. Our institutions have produced a Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, a Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and two U.S. Surgeon Generals—and just as importantly, numerous physicians and other health care providers who disproportionately and proudly serve people of color in medically-underserved communities. We are doing what needs to be done for the American people in a way that is incomparable to other schools.

Our mission to train culturally competent providers willing and eager to serve their community comes at a cost. HBCU medical schools do not enjoy the institutional wherewithal, financial resources, academic affiliations, and endowments of other medical schools. We accept that as part of our mission, but it leads us to be disproportionately focused on securing support from federal programs that are—or should be—designed to level the playing field in our ability to train health care professionals and strengthen our institutions. We need your committee’s help and leadership to continue to position us to make an outsized contribution to improving the health status of minorities and all Americans—which is clearly a national priority.

In recent years, Congress has responded to health workforce challenges by increasing the number of federally supported graduate medical education (GME) positions through Medicare and the Teaching Health Centers program. Medical schools in general are grateful for these additional positions because they support training opportunities against a backdrop of a national physician shortage. Unfortunately, relatively few of these additional GME positions have accrued to teaching hospitals or health centers affiliated with Historically Black Medical Schools.

If indeed it is a priority to increase the number of physicians in communities of color and medically underserved communities, there should be specific provisions in each of these programs that direct a meaningful portion of these GME slots to teaching hospitals and health centers affiliated with our HBCU medical schools. Priority consideration of such hospitals and health centers will align with the goals of the GME programs and ensure health workforce shortages are being appropriately addressed in medically underserved communities throughout the U.S.

Representatives Terri Sewell (AL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA) have introduced the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2023 (H.R. 2389) which would dedicate additional GME positions to teaching hospitals affiliated with HBCU medical schools, and we believe this bill is a good model for the Senate’s efforts on Medicare and Teaching Health Center GME legislation.



Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a few moments to describe Morehouse School of Medicine's partnership with CommonSpirit Health (CSH). This 10-year partnership is the first nationwide initiative between two of the country's leading health organizations to address the underlying causes of health inequity, including underrepresentation of Black clinicians. The partnership will lay the foundation for patients to have more access to Black clinicians and for Black medical students and graduates to gain community-based experience.

Additionally, it will allow MSM to expand its enrollment—increasing the pipeline of students recruited from underserved and rural communities. As one of the largest nonprofit health systems in the nation, CSH serves some of the most diverse communities in the country and cares for more Medicaid patients than any other health system in the United States. Together, our two organizations will leverage a combined 100 years of experience to address health disparities in underserved communities and continue to elevate care for vulnerable patients.

One of the greatest impacts of this partnership is the transformation of career opportunities for MSM students within the CommonSpirit network of medical facilities. Five remote medical campuses will launch as a part of the Morehouse School of Medicine and CommonSpirit partnership, enabling third- and fourth year medical and second year physician assistant students to complete their respective degrees while working in settings that reflect MSM and CommonSpirit's commitment to educating students from underserved and rural communities.

Critical to the success of this partnership is the availability and targeting of graduate medical education positions to this effort. Through this partnership, we are doing our part in the national effort to improve the health status of minority Americans. We need your help in making this effort an ongoing success.

My colleagues will discuss the importance of other federal programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that provide institutional support, pipeline programs, and research infrastructure at our schools—and are critical to our success.

In my opening remarks, I made reference to our partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies that has been so meaningful to reduce the debt burden our students take on to become a physician. More detailed information is submitted below for the record.

Once again, we are very grateful that you and the committee are taking the time and making the effort to join us today to examine these critical issues.



IMPACT of Bloomberg Partnership with Morehouse School of Medicine to be submitted for the hearing record:

- Black doctors save more Black lives. Black patients overall have better health outcomes when they are treated by Black doctors. The data overwhelmingly supports this, and better health leads to fewer medical bills and more economic opportunity.
- Medical school debt is a big factor in future Black doctors not getting their degrees or feeling that it's necessary to work outside of their communities and desired specialties when they graduate.
- Bloomberg Philanthropies' \$26.5-million investment in the students of Morehouse School of Medicine helps lift the crushing burden of student debt and empowers graduates to work in underserved areas.
- Morehouse School of Medicine has currently awarded almost \$19 million in scholarship support from the Bloomberg award.
- The Bloomberg Scholarship program has worked in lowering MD student debt. From the two MD classes to graduate with the Bloomberg Scholarship, the average student debt was reduced \$59K per student (\$250K to \$191K) for the class of 2021 and \$64K per student (\$250K to \$186K) for the class of 2022.
- The Mobile Vaccination component of the Bloomberg Initiative has been instrumental in 2 aspects. The funds allowed for MSM to better serve and protect the community during the Covid pandemic and enhance the training of all MSM students in providing care to the underserved.
- Since receipt of the funds, there has been an emphasis to vaccinate the following communities, 65 and over, Black and Hispanic, and rural communities. MSM used its funding support to extend the institution's outreach to include influenza vaccinations and health screenings. These efforts were further enhanced with the purchase of two sprinters that have been used to provide care and vaccinations to rural communities and provide services in diverse communities in North, Southeast and Southwest Georgia. As a result, the following was achieved:
 - 12000+ vaccinations
 - 1000+ health screenings for chronic disease
 - 175 influenza vaccination
 - 90+ zip codes served, throughout the state of GA
- Regarding the students, all disciplines have been exposed to the needs of both urban and rural underserved communities. This has allowed development of their clinical skills, educating the community regarding the covid virus, the impact on chronic illness, and in understanding the importance of primary care for the underserved. Many of the outcomes highlighted were the results of students committed to advancing health equity through our student-led clinic, the MSM HEAL Clinic (Health Equity for All Lives) and our mobile team. Additional impact:
 - 154 students trained to provide POC (point-of-care) health screenings
 - 100+ students trained to provide covid and flu vaccinations