



## Workforce Shortages/Graduate Medical Education (GME)

The National Association of Spine Specialists (NASS) urges Congress to address the workforce shortages in many specialties that will jeopardize access to care by cosponsoring the bipartisan “**Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act**” (H.R. 2267/S. 1301) introduced by Representatives Joseph Crowley (D-NY) and Ryan Costello (R-PA); and Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Dean Heller (R-NV), and Charles Schumer (D-NY).

### BACKGROUND

The “**Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act**” will improve the nation’s GME system and help to preserve access to specialty care by:

- Increasing the number of Medicare-supported GME residency slots by 15,000 over the next 5 years;
- Directing half of the newly available positions to training in shortage specialties;
- Specifying priorities for distributing the new slots (e.g., states with new medical schools); and
- Studying strategies to increase the diversity of the health professional workforce.

### RATIONALE

According to a 2017 report by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), the United States will face an overall shortage of between 40,000-104,000 physicians by 2030. Specialty shortages will be particularly large, including neurosurgeons, urologists, cardiologists, gastroenterologists, plastic and reconstructive surgeons, and orthopaedic surgeons. A 2008 report by the Health Resources and Services Administration found that by 2020, ophthalmology and orthopedic surgery are each expected to need more than 6,000 physicians over current levels, while other specialties like urology will see shortfalls of more than 4,000 physicians. Growth in future demand for physicians will be highest among specialties that predominantly serve the elderly.

Specialty physicians require up to seven years of post-graduate residency training. By the time crisis further manifests itself, we will be unable to quickly correct it. With 10,000 seniors aging into the Medicare program every day, the need for specialist services will increase significantly. We must take steps now to ensure a fully trained specialty physician workforce for the future.

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