



March 20, 2023

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

The Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies (AABB) appreciates the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions' focus on health care workforce shortages, and commitment to identifying solutions that will be incorporated into legislation.

AABB is an international, not-for-profit association representing institutions and individuals involved in transfusion medicine and biotherapies. The association is committed to "improving lives by making transfusion medicine and biotherapies safe, available and effective worldwide." AABB works toward this vision by developing and delivering standards, accreditation, and educational programs that optimize patient and donor care and safety. AABB individual membership includes physicians, nurses, scientists, researchers, administrators, medical laboratory scientists and technologists, and other health care providers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing workforce challenges impacting medical and public health laboratories, including blood collectors, hospital transfusion service laboratories, and biotherapies laboratories. In addition to current workforce shortages, the pipeline of individuals entering the field will not meet the needs of the future. These workforce shortages are pervasive and can jeopardize patients' access to high-quality care. Examples of impacted positions include phlebotomists, medical laboratory technologists (also referred to as medical laboratory scientists), medical laboratory technicians, and supervisory staff roles.¹

AABB recommends that the Committee include medical and public health laboratory professionals, including the workforce for blood collectors, hospital transfusion service laboratories, and biotherapies laboratories, in all health care workforce solutions. These solutions should bolster the current laboratory workforce and strengthen the pipeline of skilled laboratory professionals. Examples of such solutions may include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing a program within the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) to support the laboratory workforce.
- Expanding eligibility and funding for federal scholarships, fellowships, and loan repayment programs to include the entire laboratory workforce.
- Increasing available immigration options, such as access to employment-based visas, for trained laboratory professionals.

¹ Edna Garcia, MPH, Iman Kundu, MPH, Melissa Kelly, PhD, Ryan Soles, MS, The American Society for Clinical Pathology's 2018 Vacancy Survey of Medical Laboratories in the United States, *American Journal of Clinical Pathology*, Volume 152, Issue 2, August 2019, Pages 155–168, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcp/aqz046>.

- Expanding the National Health Service Corps Scholarship Program to include laboratory personnel.
- Dedicating federal funding to activities that will raise the visibility of laboratory medicine careers.
- Providing funding to increase the availability and capacity of laboratory training programs and to support career development educational opportunities.
- Increasing funding for the Faculty Loan Repayment Program to incentivize service as medical laboratory faculty.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at lmstone@aabb.org.

Sincerely,

Leah Mendelsohn Stone, JD