

April 25, 2023

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

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

The Honorable Richard Hudson
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sanders, Ranking Member Cassidy, and Representatives Hudson and Eshoo:

We, the undersigned organizations, represent medical and public health laboratory workforce and healthcare organizations in the United States. This letter is in response to the Committee's recent work examining the healthcare workforce shortages across our nation and in response to Congress' ongoing efforts to reauthorize the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act. The laboratory workforce organizations that are part of our coalition represent approximately 350,000 essential laboratory professionals and pathologists responsible for patient care and public health.

We urge the Committee to include the medical and public health laboratory workforce as a primary consideration in all policy solutions related to addressing healthcare workforce shortages. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, the pathology and laboratory medicine workforce was suffering from staffing shortages. COVID has significantly worsened these problems. Currently, most medical and public health laboratories suffer from significant personnel shortages, and many are operating at or near crisis-mode. Staffing shortages now have the potential to undermine the ability of these laboratories to provide timely test results, which is imperative to both the public health and patient access to quality care. These shortages are the result of high educational costs, lack of familiarity with laboratory medicine as a career option, declines in the number of training programs and students trained, and high levels of workload, stress, and burnout.

Currently, the Health Resource and Services Administration administers a number of programs designed to support the healthcare workforce. These programs, in the form of grants to training programs, scholarship and fellowship programs, and loan repayment programs, are generally reserved for a subset of health professionals, such as physicians, nurses, and dentists. Laboratory professionals, and in particular entry-level laboratory professionals, are unable to benefit from these programs. To better address the workforce shortages affecting the medical and public health laboratory workforce, **we urge Congress to include medical and public health laboratory professionals in all federal workforce programs and to consider how addressing visa issues could help the laboratory and pathology workforce.**

The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Bill Cassidy, Richard Hudson and Anna Eshoo

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We look forward to working with Congress to address healthcare workforce shortages. If you have any questions, please contact Matthew Schulze, Director, ASCP Center for Public Policy at Matthew.Schulze@ascp.org or Leah Mendelsohn Stone, JD, Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies at LMStone@aabb.org.

Sincerely,

American Association for Clinical Chemistry
American Association of Pathologists' Assistants
American Clinical Laboratory Association
American Medical Technologists
American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Clinical Pathology Board of Certification
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Cytopathology
American Society of Hematology
America's Blood Centers
Association for Molecular Pathology (AMP)
Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies
Association of Genetic Technologists
Association of Pathology Chairs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
College of American Pathologists
COLA Inc.
Infectious Diseases Society of America
National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME)
National Society for Histotechnology
Philippine Association of Medical Technologists-USA, Inc.
Project Sant Fe Foundation
The Joint Commission