

**Isaac Rubin**

*Press Secretary*

Congressman Raul Ruiz, M.D. (CA-36)

2342 Rayburn HOB | (202) 225-5330

<https://ruiz.house.gov/>



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

May 30, 2019

**CONTACT:**

Hernan Quintas, [Hernan.Quintas@mail.house.gov](mailto:Hernan.Quintas@mail.house.gov), 202-302-1137

**Reps. Ruiz, Roe Introduce Legislation to Expand Teaching Health Center Programs, Address the Physician Shortage**

**Washington, D.C.** – Today, Representatives Raul Ruiz, M.D. (D-CA) and Phil Roe, M.D. (R-TN) announced the introduction of H.R. 2815, the Training the Next Generation of Primary Care Doctors Act, bipartisan legislation to improve rural communities’ access to physicians. The bill reauthorizes and expands the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program to address the physician shortage facing communities across the country.

“Too many of our friends, family members, and neighbors are forced to suffer without the health care they need due to a shortage of doctors,” **said Dr. Ruiz.** “As an emergency medicine physician, I have seen firsthand the dire effects of a lack of providers in underserved areas in our local communities. That’s why I’m introducing the bipartisan Training the Next Generation of Primary Care Doctors Act, which addresses the physician shortage and helps support and grow the much-needed next generation of providers in the Coachella Valley and across the nation.”

“According to the California Health Care Foundation, 36% of active physicians are over the age of 60,” **said Gary Rotto, Senior Vice President of Government and Community Affairs at Borrego Health.** “That means that over the next five years, we will see an increasing number of physicians either scaling back their practice or retiring. We already have a physician shortage in our community. Unless we can make strides to reduce the shortage now, we will be headed for a crisis in the not too distance future. Congressman Ruiz’s legislation not only continues to fund Teaching Health Centers for five years, but also seeks to increase funding so that we can get ahead of this problem.”

“On behalf of our members – and in fact all community health centers across the nation – we thank Congressman Ruiz for his bill – H.R. 2815 – which will invest in, support, and build a healthy, diverse, and robust health care workforce – one that all Californians sorely need and richly deserve!” **said Henry Tuttle, President and CEO of Health Center Partners of California.**

“This program will provide organizations like ours a pathway to connect and hire qualified doctors in our underserved communities,” **said Claudia Galvez, Chief Officer of Government and Community Affairs at Clinicas de Salud del Pueblo.**

“Our country is facing a significant shortage of providers in the coming years, and it’s clearly time for an ‘all-hands-on-deck’ approach to create as many opportunities as possible to train qualified young physicians to care for our rapidly aging population,” **said Representative Dr. Phil Roe (R-TN).** “Teaching health centers – which include federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics and tribal health centers – provide critical care to some of our nation’s most vulnerable and traditionally underserved populations, especially in rural areas like East Tennessee. I am happy to be working across the aisle on an effort to increase graduate medical education funding options for these health centers across the nation to train the next generation of physicians.”

## **Background**

On May 30, 2019, Rep. Ruiz announced the introduction of the Training the Next Generation of Primary Care Doctors Act, legislation that reauthorizes and expands the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) Program. The nationwide program has a proven track record of addressing the nation’s physician shortage, which is particularly severe in the Coachella Valley.

The Inland Empire has the lowest physician to resident ratio in all of California. Studies indicate that areas in the Coachella Valley only have one full-time equivalent physician per 9,000 residents, compared to the Health Resources and Services Administration’s recommended ratio of one physician to 2,000 people. The shortage has many root causes, including an aging physician population and the tendency of medical residents to train and practice in more urban areas.

The innovative THCGME program – first established by the Affordable Care Act in 2010 – funds residency positions at community-based primary care settings, many of which serve rural and underserved populations. Because many medical students go on to serve the communities where they practice medicine, residency programs that train in Federally Qualified Health Centers have helped address physician shortages in low-income regions across the country.

H.R. 2815, the Training the Next Generation of Primary Care Doctors Act would address the physician shortage and strengthen the THCGME Program by:

- Reauthorizing the program (set to expire on September 30, 2019);
- Increasing funding for existing Teaching Healthy Centers;
- Providing more than \$100 million in new funding to establish new teaching health centers across the country.

###