

Report highlights cost estimates for training residents in a Teaching Health Center

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A new study reveals that the average cost to train a Teaching Health Center resident is estimated to be \$157,602 per year. The report, "The Cost of Residency Training in Teaching Health Centers", published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* comes as current Teaching Health Centers embark on what could be their last year in existence starting July 1, 2016.

The Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education (THCGME) program was created in 2010, as a 5 year initiative, to increase the number of primary care residents and dentists trained in community-based settings. The program was extended for an additional 2 years in 2015 but is currently set to expire in September 2017. Although the program was extended, it was funded at almost a 40% reduction with programs operating at \$95,000 per resident, in place of the previous amount of \$150,000. This lower payment level has left many programs struggling to find additional funding and teetering on the brink of closure. Many programs that are withstanding the loss have agreed they cannot continue with the reduced funding level in perpetuity; but are hopeful that this report illustrates the true cost of producing the next generation of primary care physicians.

The THCGME program to date has garnered bi-partisan support for its financial transparency and has been highly successfully in recruiting and retaining primary care physicians where they are needed most. This costing study report has been widely anticipated as it depicts an estimate of costs on the ever-elusive graduate medical education (GME) training

costs.

"We are in the midst of a primary care crisis," said Senator Bernie Sanders (D-VT). "At a time when millions of Americans lack access to health care, we must protect and expand Teaching Health Center programs that train much-needed primary care providers."

Other Congressional members agreed and vowed their support for Teaching Health Center programs.

"As someone who grew up in a rural community, I know all too well their unique needs, particularly when it comes to accessing quality health care," said Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA).

"Teaching Health Centers provide solutions to rural doctor shortages that help diversify the supply of available training sites and ensure that the federal investment in graduate [medical education](#) is as varied as the people who rely on it. I am proud to continue to support this vital program and work on ensuring permanency of the program is a reality in the future."

"It's very clear that in communities across the country, including in my home state of Washington, the shortage of [primary care](#) doctors is a challenge for too many families," said Senator Patty Murray (D-WA). "I believe strongly that patients and families should be able to get the care they need when and where they need it. Teaching Health Centers are critical to reaching this goal. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues on sustainable funding to support and expand this important program for families in Washington state and nationwide."

"By training family physicians in community-based settings, Teaching Health Centers have helped address the challenge of physician shortage in rural and underserved areas," said Congressman Doug LaMalfa (R-CA). "We already know the money we are investing today in this

program has had a considerable impact on the health on hundreds of thousands of people across the country, both in terms of expanding access to care and reducing unnecessary emergency room visits. The report released earlier this week, highlighting the cost of residency training, will now help us ensure this critical funding is spent in the most efficient and effective way possible."

More information: Marsha Regenstein et al, The Cost of Residency Training in Teaching Health Centers, *New England Journal of Medicine* (2016). [DOI: 10.1056/NEJMp1607866](https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp1607866)

Provided by American Association of Teaching Health Centers

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