

HOUSE MEMORIAL 64

53RD LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2018

INTRODUCED BY

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A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE SECRETARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO CONVENE A PHYSICAL THERAPY WORKFORCE INCENTIVES STUDY GROUP TO INVESTIGATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH NEW MEXICO'S WORKFORCE INCENTIVES, INCLUDING HEALTH PROFESSIONAL LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE, ARE PROVIDING ADEQUATE INCENTIVES TO PHYSICAL THERAPISTS AND PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS TO LOCATE OR REMAIN IN THE STATE.

WHEREAS, physical therapists and physical therapist assistants are an essential part of the health care system, providing care that restores patients to full functioning for greater, fuller participation in life activities; and

WHEREAS, physical therapists and physical therapist assistants may be found in clinical settings, in rehabilitation centers and in patients' homes, in each setting playing an

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1 essential role in rehabilitation; and

2 WHEREAS, according to the aging and long-term services  
3 department, from 2000 to 2030, New Mexico's population aged  
4 sixty years and older is projected to increase seventy percent;  
5 and

6 WHEREAS, by 2030, New Mexico will rank third in the nation  
7 in percentage of population aged sixty years and older; and

8 WHEREAS, as the population of New Mexicans ages, the  
9 demand for physical therapy services to maintain and restore  
10 full functioning will be even greater; and

11 WHEREAS, New Mexico has the sixth-lowest rate among the  
12 states of licensed physical therapists, with approximately  
13 sixty-nine per one hundred thousand New Mexicans, while the  
14 national average is approximately eighty-seven physical  
15 therapists per one hundred thousand people; and

16 WHEREAS, despite the value of physical therapy services,  
17 physical therapists' and physical therapist assistants' earning  
18 potential is quite low in proportion to the debts they incur  
19 for their physical therapy education; and

20 WHEREAS, compared to other health care practitioners,  
21 physical therapists have the largest student debt compared to  
22 their earning potential; and

23 WHEREAS, becoming a physical therapist entails seven years  
24 of study, including earning a bachelor's degree and doctor of  
25 physical therapy degree; and

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1           WHEREAS, according to a recent survey of New Mexico  
2 physical therapists, a recent graduate of a physical therapy  
3 educational program has incurred a debt, combining student debt  
4 with other forms of debt such as credit cards and other loans,  
5 that may be as much as two hundred ninety-seven thousand  
6 dollars (\$297,000); and

7           WHEREAS, a recent survey of New Mexico physical therapist  
8 assistants reports that the average physical therapist  
9 assistant graduates with approximately seventeen thousand  
10 dollars (\$17,000) in student debt; and

11           WHEREAS, the legislature created the rural health care  
12 practitioner tax credit to provide an incentive to health care  
13 providers to offer their badly needed services in rural,  
14 underserved areas of the state; and

15           WHEREAS, the rural health care practitioner tax credit is  
16 not available to physical therapists or physical therapist  
17 assistants, thus depriving physical therapists and physical  
18 therapist assistants of this tax relief and worsening the lack  
19 of physical therapy services in rural, underserved areas of the  
20 state; and

21           WHEREAS, health care workforce incentives programs such as  
22 the New Mexico health service corps and national health service  
23 corps, which may provide scholarships or loan-for-service  
24 assistance to health professionals who make service  
25 commitments, are not available to physical therapists or

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1 physical therapist assistants; and

2 WHEREAS, the New Mexico health professional loan repayment  
3 program, created in 1995 to benefit designated health  
4 professional shortage areas by creating incentives for physical  
5 therapists, physical therapist assistants and other health  
6 professionals to serve in these communities, does not  
7 adequately offset the high debt loads that physical therapy  
8 providers have when they graduate from accredited physical  
9 therapy programs and begin practicing;

10 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
11 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the secretary  
12 of higher education be requested to convene a physical therapy  
13 workforce incentives study group to investigate the extent to  
14 which New Mexico's workforce incentives, including health  
15 professional loan repayment assistance, are providing adequate  
16 incentives to physical therapists and physical therapist  
17 assistants to locate or remain in the state; and

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the secretary of higher  
19 education invite to join the physical therapy workforce  
20 incentives study group representatives from the physical  
21 therapy board, the New Mexico chapter of the American physical  
22 therapy association, the department of health's office of  
23 primary care and rural health and others with expertise in  
24 workforce development, public finance and health care delivery;  
25 and

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