

**BERNIE PLANS HEALTH WORKER LEGISLATION** — After presiding over a HELP Committee hearing on health care workforce concerns, Sen. [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) told Pulse he was “absolutely” planning legislation to address the issue.

Though Sanders didn’t share details about coming proposals, he said during the hearing that the national teaching health center program, which allows medical residents to work in community health centers and primary care, should be expanded.

He added that more student debt relief should be made available for health workers who commit to work in areas with provider shortages.

Sanders also said the country’s graduate medical education system needs to be significantly expanded, noting that it’s in the Senate Finance Committee’s jurisdiction.

Sanders said the HELP committee would discuss the issue of mental health worker shortages “at length” in the future.

**MORE ABOUT THE FIRST HELP HEARING** — Ranking member [Bill Cassidy](#) (R-La.) had additional ideas on growing the health care workforce, including reducing doctors’ administrative burden and ensuring health workers can easily further their education largely on-site.

“Why don’t we use the workforce we have more efficiently?” he said.

The providers who testified before the committee brought up other possible solutions, including expanding the training staff and incentivizing graduates to work in settings with shortages.

Witnesses and committee members alike emphasized the need to recruit diverse candidates for training, saying it’s a key to more providers working where they’re needed most. Some argued the government should offer more visas for immigrants looking to work in health care.

**A BILL TO BOOST THE MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE** — Sens. [Tina Smith](#) (D-Minn.), [Lisa Murkowski](#) (R-Alaska) and [Maggie Hassan](#) (D-N.H.) [introduced a bill Thursday](#) to expand an existing program that forgives student loans for those working to treat substance abuse disorder.

The bill would expand loan forgiveness to include other mental health workers, not just those focused on substance abuse disorder. It would also boost the program’s annual funding from \$25 million to \$50 million and extend it through 2032.

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