

United States Senate

November 13, 2024

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

As Nevada's population continues to grow, the gap between Nevadans' medical needs and their ability to access care has only worsened over time. Today our state is facing a dire shortage of doctors, making it challenging for many Nevadans to access the quality, affordable health care that they need. That is why I helped fund 1,000 new graduate medical education (GME) residency slots through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (P.L. 116-260), which Congress passed at the end of 2020. As the majority of these new GME slots remain to be awarded, Nevada continues to be in desperate need of additional physicians. As you continue to assess Nevada's medical workforce needs, including for our rural communities, I urge you to award our state a greater proportion of residency slots so we can better meet Nevadans' critical medical needs.

To date, of the 1,000 new medical residency slots Congress made available nearly four years ago, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has only allocated a small number to Nevada, which have not sufficiently kept up with the pace of our state's surging population growth. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Nevada was the fastest growing state in the nation from 2000 to 2023. As result of graduate medical residency slot allocation not matching this growth, our rankings for access to health care fall near the bottom of the nation, clearly demonstrating our state's desperate need for more physicians. Nevada currently ranks:

- 45th in the nation for active physicians,
- 48th for primary care physicians, and
- 49th for general surgeons.

Nevada has been working hard to address these shortfalls, but our state's health care fate rests primarily in CMS' hands. We rank 24th in the nation for the proportion of undergraduate medical students, but only 41st for residency and medical fellowship slots. The solution is clear—we need more GME slots from CMS to train physicians in Nevada. The more doctors who train in our state, the more who will stay to practice medicine and take care of patients.

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CMS has so far allocated 400 of the new residency slots funded by Congress, and it is critical that Nevada receive a more equitable distribution of the remaining 600 slots. Therefore, please provide information on why our state has received so few GME slots in the first two distribution rounds, along with specific information on any steps that can be taken to improve the likelihood of Nevada hospitals receiving more slots in the upcoming rounds. Additionally, please provide recommendations on the best approach for rebasing the outdated GME caps and adjusting allocation based on current state populations, with consideration for recent and continued growth.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. I look forward to working with you on solutions to address the dire physician shortage in Nevada.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jacky Rosen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jacky" and last name "Rosen" clearly legible.

Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator

CC: The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure