

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, and Ranking Member Cole:

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS), a national non-profit organization comprised of nearly 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals and basic and clinical researchers dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of older Americans, urges you to support at least **\$51 million in FY 2022 for the geriatrics education and training programs under Title VII of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act.**

The AGS appreciates your ongoing support of the Title VII Geriatrics Health Professions Programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). We are grateful for the increases appropriated in FY 2021 and for the supplemental funding as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided to support much needed telehealth services during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). The Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs (GWEPs) and recipients of Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACAs) have and continue to be on the frontlines of the COVID-19 PHE, ensuring their clinical and educational training can enhance their institutions' and communities' response to the pandemic and its impacts on older adults. Most recently, the GWEPs and GACAs have been an asset for states especially as many states and localities grapple with an age-friendly rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and with vaccine hesitancy. GWEPs have been staffing call lines to assist older adults to register for the vaccine, advising local authorities on making the sign-up websites age-friendly, and working with health systems to participate in the rollout and outreach to vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, preventing widening the health disparity gap exacerbated by the pandemic. Looking forward, these programs will be critical in providing assistance for proactive public health planning with their geriatrics expertise and knowledge of long-term care and can help ensure states and local governments have improved plans for older adults in disaster preparedness for future pandemics and natural disasters. Furthermore, as the U.S. population rapidly ages, access to a well-trained workforce and appropriate care for medically complex older adults is imperative to maintaining the health and quality of life for this growing segment of the nation's population.

Our healthcare workforce receives little, if any, training in geriatric principles,<sup>1</sup> which leaves us ill-prepared to care for older Americans as health needs evolve, especially during the current crisis. With our nation continuing

---

<sup>1</sup> Only 3 percent of medical students take even one class in geriatric medicine and fewer than 1 percent of RNs, pharmacists, physician assistances and physical therapists are certified in geriatrics or gerontology. Yet estimates are that by 2030, 3.5 million additional health care professionals and direct-care workers will be needed to care for older adults.

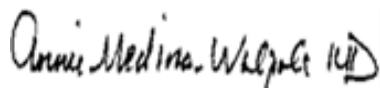
to face a severe shortage of geriatrics healthcare providers and academics with the expertise to train these providers, the AGS believes it is urgent that we increase the number of educational and training opportunities in geriatrics and gerontology. The requested increase in funding over FY 2021 levels would help ensure that HRSA receives the funding necessary to expand these critically important programs commensurate with the increasing need. Additional funding will also allow HRSA to expand the number of GWEPs and GACAs and move toward closing the current geographic and demographic gaps in geriatrics workforce training. As our nation works toward recovery and resilience from the COVID-19 pandemic, our population will continue to age, and the need for training in geriatrics and gerontology will continue to increase. The only federal programs that focus on training the workforce to care for older Americans must keep pace with that growth.

**Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs.** The GWEP is currently the only federal program designed to increase the number of providers, in a variety of disciplines, with the skills and training to care for older adults. The GWEPs educate and engage the broader frontline workforce, including family caregivers, and focus on opportunities to improve the quality of care delivered to older adults, particularly in underserved and rural areas. The GWEP was launched in 2015 by HRSA with 44 three-year grants provided to awardees in 29 states. In 2019, HRSA funded a second cohort of 48 GWEPs across 35 states and two territories (Guam and Puerto Rico) and provided extension grants to 15 former GWEP awardees. Due to GWEPs' partnerships with primary care and community-based organizations, GWEPs are uniquely positioned to rapidly address the needs of older adults and their caregivers.

**Geriatrics Academic Career Awards.** The GACA program is an essential complement to the GWEP. GACAs ensure we can equip early-career clinician educators to become leaders in geriatrics education and research. It is the only federal program designed to increase the number of faculty with geriatrics expertise in a variety of disciplines. The program was eliminated in 2015 through a consolidation of several training programs. However, the program was reestablished in November 2018 when HRSA released a funding opportunity indicating their intention to fund 26 GACAs for four years starting September 1, 2019. Since 1998, original GACA recipients have trained as many as 65,000 colleagues in geriatrics expertise and have contributed to geriatrics education, research, and leadership across the U.S.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request. If you have comments or questions about HRSA funding or other issues related to the healthy aging of older Americans, please contact Anna Kim, Manager of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or [akim@americangeriatrics.org](mailto:akim@americangeriatrics.org).

Sincerely,



Annette Medina-Walpole, MD, AGSF  
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA  
Chief Executive Officer

---

2018 Issue Brief, Eldercare Workforce Alliance, available at: [https://eldercareworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWEP\\_OnePager\\_v2.pdf](https://eldercareworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWEP_OnePager_v2.pdf)

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Vice Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS & Education

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Murray, and Ranking Member Blunt:

The American Geriatrics Society (AGS), a national non-profit organization comprised of nearly 6,000 geriatrics healthcare professionals and basic and clinical researchers dedicated to improving the health, independence, and quality of life of older Americans, urges you to support at least **\$51 million in FY 2022 for the geriatrics education and training programs under Title VII of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act.**

The AGS appreciates your ongoing support of the Title VII Geriatrics Health Professions Programs at the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). We are grateful for the increases appropriated in FY 2021 and for the supplemental funding as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided to support much needed telehealth services during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). The Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs (GWEPs) and recipients of Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACAs) have and continue to be on the frontlines of the COVID-19 PHE, ensuring their clinical and educational training can enhance their institutions' and communities' response to the pandemic and its impacts on older adults. Most recently, the GWEPs and GACAs have been an asset for states especially as many states and localities grapple with an age-friendly rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine and with vaccine hesitancy. GWEPs have been staffing call lines to assist older adults to register for the vaccine, advising local authorities on making the sign-up websites age-friendly, and working with health systems to participate in the rollout and outreach to vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, preventing widening the health disparity gap exacerbated by the pandemic. Looking forward, these programs will be critical in providing assistance for proactive public health planning with their geriatrics expertise and knowledge of long-term care and can help ensure states and local governments have improved plans for older adults in disaster preparedness for future pandemics and natural disasters. Furthermore, as the U.S. population rapidly ages, access to a well-trained workforce and appropriate care for medically complex older adults is imperative to maintaining the health and quality of life for this growing segment of the nation's population.

Our healthcare workforce receives little, if any, training in geriatric principles,<sup>1</sup> which leaves us ill-prepared to care for older Americans as health needs evolve, especially during the current crisis. With our nation continuing

---

<sup>1</sup> Only 3 percent of medical students take even one class in geriatric medicine and fewer than 1 percent of RNs, pharmacists, physician assistances and physical therapists are certified in geriatrics or gerontology. Yet estimates are that by 2030, 3.5 million additional health care professionals and direct-care workers will be needed to care for older adults.

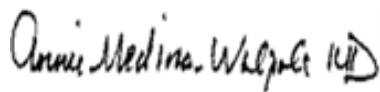
to face a severe shortage of geriatrics healthcare providers and academics with the expertise to train these providers, the AGS believes it is urgent that we increase the number of educational and training opportunities in geriatrics and gerontology. The requested increase in funding over FY 2021 levels would help ensure that HRSA receives the funding necessary to expand these critically important programs commensurate with the increasing need. Additional funding will also allow HRSA to expand the number of GWEPs and GACAs and move toward closing the current geographic and demographic gaps in geriatrics workforce training. As our nation works toward recovery and resilience from the COVID-19 pandemic, our population will continue to age, and the need for training in geriatrics and gerontology will continue to increase. The only federal programs that focus on training the workforce to care for older Americans must keep pace with that growth.

**Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs.** The GWEP is currently the only federal program designed to increase the number of providers, in a variety of disciplines, with the skills and training to care for older adults. The GWEPs educate and engage the broader frontline workforce, including family caregivers, and focus on opportunities to improve the quality of care delivered to older adults, particularly in underserved and rural areas. The GWEP was launched in 2015 by HRSA with 44 three-year grants provided to awardees in 29 states. In 2019, HRSA funded a second cohort of 48 GWEPs across 35 states and two territories (Guam and Puerto Rico) and provided extension grants to 15 former GWEP awardees. Due to GWEPs' partnerships with primary care and community-based organizations, GWEPs are uniquely positioned to rapidly address the needs of older adults and their caregivers.

**Geriatrics Academic Career Awards.** The GACA program is an essential complement to the GWEP. GACAs ensure we can equip early-career clinician educators to become leaders in geriatrics education and research. It is the only federal program designed to increase the number of faculty with geriatrics expertise in a variety of disciplines. The program was eliminated in 2015 through a consolidation of several training programs. However, the program was reestablished in November 2018 when HRSA released a funding opportunity indicating their intention to fund 26 GACAs for four years starting September 1, 2019. Since 1998, original GACA recipients have trained as many as 65,000 colleagues in geriatrics expertise and have contributed to geriatrics education, research, and leadership across the U.S.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request. If you have comments or questions about HRSA funding or other issues related to the healthy aging of older Americans, please contact Anna Kim, Manager of Public Affairs & Advocacy, at 212-308-1414 or [akim@americangeriatrics.org](mailto:akim@americangeriatrics.org).

Sincerely,



Annette Medina-Walpole, MD, AGSF  
President



Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA  
Chief Executive Officer

---

2018 Issue Brief, Eldercare Workforce Alliance, available at: [https://eldercareworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWEP\\_OnePager\\_v2.pdf](https://eldercareworkforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWEP_OnePager_v2.pdf)