

Pathways for increasing physician supply in Maryland

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Chair Pena-MeInyk, Vice-Chair Cullison, and all distinguished members of the Maryland House Health and Government Operations Committee

Thank you for allowing us to comment on physician licensing reform in Maryland. We are both researchers with the Knee Regulatory Research Center at West Virginia University.

The main takeaways of our comments are the following:

1. Maryland currently has a shortage of physicians
2. Our research shows that the share of immigrant physicians fell by more than 2% points in 2021—a decline of more than 13,000 nationwide—from 2019 to 2021.
3. Offering immigrant physicians a less burdensome pathway to practice can ease this shortage.

The Physician shortage in Maryland

Like many other states, Maryland has a physician shortage. This shortage is particularly acute in rural Maryland. Maryland is projected to have a shortfall of more than 1,000 doctors in 2030.¹

If patients do not have access to physicians, they may experience longer drive times and/or wait times to receive care. Having access to health insurance is much less helpful if there is a shortage of providers of care.

Opening Pathways for Foreign Trained Physicians

Recently published research that we authored illustrates recent trends in immigrant physicians.² From 2019 to 2021, the share of immigrant physicians in the US fell from 28.6% to 26.5 percent. Looking at nationwide totals of physicians, this represents a decline of more than 13,000

¹ <https://ciceroinstitute.org/research/maryland-physician-shortage-facts/>

² <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/research/understanding-role-immigrants-us-health-sector-employment-trends-2007-21>

immigrant physicians working in the US. With the challenges the US faces from a physician shortage it is important to consider every pathway to increase supply and improve healthcare access.

Maryland will not be going out on a limb if it provides a pathway for immigrant physicians to practice in select instances. Tennessee passed a more substantial reform last year.³ Illinois also passed a similar reform last year.⁴

Maryland needs doctors and it doesn't make sense to erect unnecessary barriers that prevent immigrant physicians from practicing. Common sense reform, similar to what is already in place in Tennessee and Illinois, would help alleviate physician shortages in the state—particularly in rural areas.

³<https://www.populationmedicine.org/press/YuNEJM11182023#:~:text=The%20law%20makes%20Tennessee%20the,U.S.%2Dbased%20residency%20training%20program.>

⁴ <https://www.upwardlyglobal.org/news/news/illinois-reduces-doctor-shortages/>