



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
PLASTIC SURGEONS®



THE PLASTIC SURGERY
FOUNDATION®

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ASPS ISSUE BRIEF

Graduate Medical Education

Ensuring that there are enough physicians to meet our nation's medical needs

Background

The number of Medicare funded Graduate Medical Education (GME) positions in the United States has remained capped since the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Still, there has never been greater need to increase the number of residency slots available, as an unprecedented number of Americans have access to health services through the Affordable Care Act, as more than 100,000 seniors become eligible for Medicare every day, and as the number of American medical school graduates is poised to reach record numbers.

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, an overall shortage of 91,000 physicians will occur by 2020. By 2025, the shortage is expected to reach 130,000. One-half of this shortage will come from specialty physicians, including physicians in the field of plastic surgery.

A recent American College of Surgeons Health Policy Research Institute study shows an average of two plastic surgeons per 100,000 individuals in the United States. Plastic surgeons play an integral role in the treatment of breast cancer, which is the second leading cause of death in women. It is estimated that over 230,000 new cases will be identified each year. Further, the Women's Health and Cancer Rights Act of 1998 mandates that reconstructive procedures be offered, yet shortages of qualified surgeons have and will continue to limit availability and proper care for the patient.

The Solution

Congress must pass legislation that increases the cap on Medicare funded graduate medical education slots, and it must ensure that those slots are funded. Any increases in the physician supply must account for projected specialist shortages, including those looming for plastic surgery, and also seek to improve access to care in underserved areas.

Congressional Request

Cosponsor and pass GME bills that will create additional residency slots and focus on underserved areas – the *Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2015* (H.R.2124/S.1148); the *Creating Access to Residency Education Act of 2015* (H.R.1117); and the *Building a Health Care Workforce for the Future Act* (H.R.1006/S.1757).