



H.R. 1175

Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Act of 2005

ROLE OF LABORATORY TESTING IN PATIENT CARE

The immediate impact of the laboratory in the American healthcare system is unparalleled. The vast majority of all medical diagnoses are based on laboratory test results—with some estimates citing that up to 70 percent of all medical decisions made are based directly on test outcomes. Advances in clinical laboratory testing detect and diagnose diseases faster and more accurately than ever before, allowing physicians to prescribe more effective – and often less invasive – treatment options. Because these important health care practitioners seldom have direct patient contact, their critical role in health care often goes unnoticed.

THE NEED FOR MEDICAL LABORATORY PERSONNEL

The shortage of qualified medical laboratory personnel has reached a critical level in the United States. Vacancy rates for seven of ten key laboratory medicine positions are at an all time high. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that from 2004-2014, over 15,000 new professionals in clinical laboratory science will be needed in the U.S each year. With the average age of medical technologists currently at 45, the majority of laboratory professionals will be retiring soon.

Given the aging population, the laboratory workforce will need to be able to meet the demand of greater patient numbers with more trained and educated personnel. However, fewer than 5,000 professionals are graduating from training programs each year—30 percent fewer than 10 years ago, and 56 percent fewer than 20 years ago. Schools and training facilities are not producing enough qualified personnel to keep up with the rate of loss.

But the lack of trained personnel is only part of the story. Schools for training medical personnel have been steadily evaporating in the U.S. over the last 10 years. Since 1994, the number of training programs has been reduced approximately 30 percent. Personnel turnover is also an increasing problem. With competition for laboratory personnel intensifying, turnover rates for some categories of laboratory personnel now exceed 20 percent. Because of the difficulty in finding qualified staff, medical laboratories are increasingly turning to temporary staff to handle the patient testing workload. High stress levels associated with laboratory work, potential exposures to dangerous pathogens,

demanding working schedules, and lack of career mobility have also all been cited as contributing factors to the shortage.

WHAT H.R 1175 WILL ACCOMPLISH

H.R. 1175, the Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Act introduced by Representative John Shimkus (R-IL), Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL) and Michael Bilirakis (R-FL), would assist in the recruitment of staff. Seeking to create solutions to the immediate and long-range effects of the laboratory personnel shortage, H.R. 1175 offers a varied approach to addressing the issue.

Modeled after the highly successful National Health Service Corp, H.R. 1175 would address the workforce shortage issue by creating grants, loans and other funding mechanisms that are needed to encourage students to consider careers in laboratory medicine and stimulate the development and enhancement of laboratory training programs. Specifically, passage of H.R. 1175 would:

- Create scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for students studying to work within laboratory medicine, in return for a term of service.
- Award grants and contracts designed to increase the number of allied health professionals, giving preference to entities expanding or establishing medical laboratory personnel programs.
- Provides a means of emphasis for allied health professionals and medical laboratory personnel training through a National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (at the National Institutes of Health) cooperative agreement or grant.
- Offer grants for training of cytotechnologists (a severe shortage area) to ensure the availability of cervical cancer screening.
- Fund public service announcements that promote medical laboratory personnel careers
- Authorize funding for these programs through fiscal year 2009.

WHAT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS CAN DO:

Cosponsor H.R. 1175, the Medical Laboratory Personnel Shortage Act. Contact Mo Zilly, Legislative Director for Congressman John Shimkus at (202) 225-5271 or mo.zilly@mail.house.gov.



As of 3/15/2006, this legislation has bi-partisan support with 38 cosponsors.

Rep Abercrombie, Neil [HI-1] - 7/21/2005	Rep Andrews, Robert E. [NJ-1] - 7/25/2005
Rep Barrow, John [GA-12] - 5/19/2005	Rep Bilirakis, Michael [FL-9] - 3/8/2005
Rep Bordallo, Madeleine Z. [GU] - 7/21/2005	Rep Case, Ed [HI-2] - 5/3/2005
Rep Clay, Wm. Lacy [MO-1] - 7/28/2005	Rep Cummings, Elijah E. [MD-7] - 4/5/2005
Rep Davis, Jo Ann [VA-1] - 4/28/2005	Rep DeFazio, Peter A. [OR-4] - 6/9/2005
Rep Ehlers, Vernon J. [MI-3] - 4/5/2005	Rep Filner, Bob [CA-51] - 4/26/2005
Rep Ford, Harold E., Jr. [TN-9] - 4/5/2005	Rep Frank, Barney [MA-4] - 10/6/2005
Rep Gonzalez, Charles A. [TX-20] - 4/26/2005	Rep Gordon, Bart [TN-6] - 4/5/2005
Rep Hinchey, Maurice D. [NY-22] - 4/26/2005	Rep Holden, Tim [PA-17] - 4/28/2005
Rep Holt, Rush D. [NJ-12] - 6/21/2005	Rep Jackson, Jesse L., Jr. [IL-2] - 3/8/2005
Rep Kildee, Dale E. [MI-5] - 5/3/2005	Rep LaHood, Ray [IL-18] - 3/15/2005
Rep Leach, James A. [IA-2] - 7/26/2005	Rep McCollum, Betty [MN-4] - 5/3/2005
Rep McCotter, Thaddeus G. [MI-11] - 6/7/2005	Rep McGovern, James P. [MA-3] - 4/5/2005
Rep Meehan, Martin T. [MA-5] - 6/14/2005	Rep Moore, Dennis [KS-3] - 4/26/2005
Rep Moore, Gwen [WI-4] - 4/13/2005	Rep Peterson, Collin C. [MN-7] - 4/28/2005
Rep Pickering, Charles W. (Chip) [MS-3] - 6/30/2005	Rep Platts, Todd Russell [PA-19] - 4/5/2005
Rep Price, David E. [NC-4] - 4/5/2005	Rep Ramstad, Jim [MN-3] - 5/5/2005
Rep Rothman, Steven R. [NJ-9] - 5/26/2005	Rep Sanders, Bernard [VT] - 4/5/2005
Rep Schakowsky, Janice D. [IL-9] - 4/5/2005	Rep Souder, Mark E. [IN-3] - 4/21/2005

As of 3/15/2006, this legislation has both corporate and industry sponsors.

- AABB (formerly, American Association of Blood Banks)
- American Association of Bioanalysts
- American Association for Clinical Chemistry
- American Clinical Laboratory Association
- American Medical Technologists
- American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science
- American Society for Clinical Pathology
- American Society for Cytotechnology
- American Society for Microbiology
- Association of Public Health Laboratories
- Clinical Laboratory Management Association
- College of American Pathologists
- Laboratory Corporation of America
- Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, a Johnson & Johnson company
- Quest Diagnostics Incorporated