KANSAS ACADEMY of FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Testimony: HB 2374 Creating Additional Specialty Funding in the Kansas Medical Student Loan Repayment Program
House Committee on Higher Education Budget
February 6, 2026
Written only

Chair Turk and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony in support of HB 2374. My name is Beth Oller, and I am a board-certified, full-scope family physician, practicing in Rooks County. I am testifying in support of HB 2374 on behalf of the Kansas Academy of Family Physicians (KAFP). The KAFP represents nearly 2,000 family physicians, resident physicians and medical students across our state. Providing quality health care and good health outcomes for our patients guide our policy work.

Kansas currently operates a robust and successful student loan forgiveness program for medical students. The Kansas Medical Student Loan forgiveness program has proven to be effective tool to increase workforce growth and address specific workforce needs, specifically for primary care specialties. This bill would increase the number of not only primary care physicians but other specialties serving our most underserved communities across the state.

While the physician workforce continues to be lower than ideal, according to a recent study conducted by AAMC Research and Action Institute concluded that in 2023, more than 60% of Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) for primary medical, dental, and mental health care were in rural areas (HPSAs are not defined for specialty care, making it more difficult to quantify the current shortage of specialists and subspecialists). In addition to the current shortages, the average age of active physicians in 2021 in rural areas was 56 years, compared with 52 years in urban areas; as many physicians near retirement age, rural areas may face greater shortages in the coming decades. Additionally, the Health Resources and Services Administration has projected national shortages across many specialties, such as neurology, and several surgical subspecialties.

Few students, even those who grew up in rural areas, choose to attend medical school or practice in rural areas. Practice positions remain unfilled given the difficulties in recruiting individuals to live, train, and work in rural areas. A recent study found that rural family medicine residency program fill rates were improving relative to urban areas; however small, rural areas still had lower match rates than urban areas. The share of the population that has less than a high school degree is larger in rural areas than in urban areas, meaning a smaller share of individuals have completed the prerequisites to pursue higher education in rural areas. In addition, the decreasing number of rural students planning to attend college may further exacerbate recruitment challenges.

HB 2374 will help to address these shortages. While the bill will not solve Kansas' crisis in physician healthcare delivery, it is an important step in addressing the recruitment and retention of other specialty providers, and will further serve as a piece of repairing our primary care system along with alleviating administrative burden. KAFP full supports HB 2374 and encourages this committee to support it as well.

About Kansas Academy of Family Physicians:
KAFP represents nearly 2,000 active, resident, student and life members across the state. Our member physicians are vibrant and trusted members of their communities and are dedicated to creating a healthier Kansas. Quality health care and health outcomes for our patients guide our public policy work. As family physicians, we see people of all ages, both men and women, and we work with almost every type of ailment and illness that afflict our patients.

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