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Policy Tracker



The Institute's Policy Tracker covers state and federal policy focused research and aims to educate and inform about Relevant challenges, opportunities, and potential non-partisan solutions.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES AND THE PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE



International Medical Graduates and the Physician Shortage

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INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES AND THE PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

In 2023, 24.7 percent of active physicians were IMGs, and they make up nearly one-quarter of physicians in training and practice in the United States.

Background

International medical graduates (IMGs) are physicians who have earned medical school education from an institution outside of the United States (U.S.). IMGs have played a vital role in the U.S. healthcare system by particularly working in primary care and underserved areas through programs such as the J-1 visa program and the Conrad 30 waiver. In 2023, 24.7 percent of active physicians were IMGs [1], and they make up nearly one-quarter of physicians in training and practice in the United States.

The Evaluation Service for Foreign Medical Graduates (ESFMG), which later changed its name to Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) was established in 1956 to standardize and assess the qualifications of foreign trained physicians amidst the physician shortage in the U.S. in the 1950s. The ECFMG certification, first administered in 1958, remains a cornerstone of ensuring readiness for the U.S. graduate medical education (GME) programs. Following completion of GME training, programs such as the J-1 visa and the Conrad 30 Waiver Program support the retention of international medical graduates (IMGs) by encouraging and facilitating their practice in underserved and rural communities throughout the United States. [2] A stipulation of the J-1 visa program is that upon completion of training, the physician must return to their home country for 2 years. The Conrad 30 waiver program eliminates this 2-year foreign residence requirement. States are allowed a base total of 30 waivers under this program in exchange for working in an underserved area that has a shortage of healthcare professionals for a total of at least 3 years. [3]

Significance

The need for highly qualified medical professionals in state-specific placement programs is underscored by critical physician shortage statistics. According to an the Association of American Medical Colleges, in 2023 there were 86 direct primary care physicians per 100,000 population in the United States. Furthermore, there were more that 100 million Americans who faced barriers to accessing primary care physicians. In Pennsylvania alone, the number of medically underserved residents was estimated to be 2,616,232. This deficiency in providers is more acute in rural areas, which struggle to recruit doctors, resulting in worse health outcomes compared to urban residents. The J-1 visa and Conrad 30 waiver legislations help retain the IMGs; however, certain underserved rural area physician practices do not have enough resources to hire and retain them. [2]

Recommendations

All states participate in the Conrad 30 Waiver Program, which allows up to 30 international medical graduates (IMGs) per state each year to remain in the United States and practice after completing their residency training. However, some states have enacted legislation that creates alternative pathways for internationally trained physicians (ITPs), allowing them to bypass U.S. residency training and practice directly in underserved areas, provided they meet certain experience requirements gained outside the United States. These pathways enable ITPs to obtain full licensure without completing mandatory North American postgraduate training.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES AND THE PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE



International Medical Graduates and the Physician Shortage (cont.)

States such as Arkansas and Florida grant provisional or limited licenses to ITPs who secure full-time employment with a healthcare provider located in an underserved area or health professional shortage area. In Arkansas, ITPs become eligible for a full, unrestricted license after two years of practice under a provisional license, provided they continue practicing with the qualified employer for at least one additional year. Florida requires ITPs to maintain employment with the designated healthcare provider for at least two consecutive years.

Illinois has established a pathway that allows ITPs to practice for two years under supervision and with limited authority in an area of medical need. Upon successful completion of this period, physicians may transition to a restricted license that permits independent practice within a physician shortage area. Full licensure is granted only after a minimum of four years of total practice under the program. [4]

Pennsylvania currently utilizes the federal Conrad 30 waiver program to place IMGs in medical underserved areas. [2] Additionally, the existing state statute allows the Board to issue a temporary license to qualifying applicants who satisfy educational requirements and hold an equivalent license from another country. PA is also one of the 18 states that have pending or proposed legislation to create new, specialized licensure pathways. Currently, PA lawmakers are attempting to pass several key bills that would address the physician shortage. For example, HB 1066 seeks to amend existing law to require the Board to grant a full and unrestricted license to a temporary licensee who is an IMG, has practice consecutively for at least 3 years outside of the US, and has an employment offer at a state health care facility. [4] HB 425 would establish grants to help healthcare providers hire international medical graduates. The grants

would offset a portion of physician salaries in exchange for a commitment to practice for three years in medically underserved communities. [2] Furthermore, HB 2121 (which is modeled on successful programs in other states, as mentioned in Arkansas, Florida and Illinois) would create a supervised licensure pathway for qualified international medical graduates (IMGs). The bill would allow eligible physicians with foreign training and credentials to obtain a provisional license and practice under supervision in designated underserved areas and approved specialties. Successful completion of the provisional period could lead to full licensure. The legislation is intended to expand the physician workforce while maintaining oversight and patient safety standards.

Sources

- [1] Association of American Medical Colleges. (2024). 2024 key findings and definitions [Data & reports]. <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/data/2024-key-findings-and-definitions>
- [2] Pennsylvania House of Representatives. (2024, December 20). Co-sponsorship memo no. 44539: J-1 Visa Waiver Primary Care Physician Grant Program [Memorandum]. Pennsylvania General Assembly. <https://www.palegis.us/house/co-sponsorship/memo?memoID=44539>
- [3] Text - S.948 - 116th Congress (2019–2020): Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act. (2019, March 28). <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116th-congress/senate-bill/948/text>
- [4] Federation of State Medical Boards. (2025, October). States with enacted and proposed additional licensure pathways: State-by-state overview [PDF]. Federation of State Medical Boards.
- [5] Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates. (2025, August 18). History. InTealth. <https://www.ecfmg.org/about/history.html>
- [6] Pennsylvania House of Representatives. (2025, October 20). House Co-Sponsorship Memo No. 47564 [Memorandum]. Pennsylvania General Assembly. <https://www.palegis.us/house/co-sponsorship/memo?memoID=47564>
- [7] Text - H.R.3733 - 118th Congress (2023–2024): International Medical Graduates Assistance Act of 2023. (2024, December 17). <https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/3733/text>

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES AND THE PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Pennsylvania currently utilizes the federal Conrad 30 waiver program to place IMGs in medical underserved areas

**RETROACTIVE
MEDICAID ELIGIBILITY
CHANGES**



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ELIGIBILITY CHANGES**

Beginning in 2027, retroactive coverage will be reduced from three months to one month for Medicaid Expansion programs and two months for all other Medicaid programs.

Retroactive Medicaid Eligibility Changes and Their Potential Impact on the Aging Population

Background

Medicaid covers the basic expenses associated with living and receiving care in a nursing home, and Retroactive Medicaid extends that protection to qualified applicants for up to three months before the date of application, provided they were eligible during that period. However, beginning in 2027, retroactive coverage will be reduced from three months to one month for Medicaid Expansion programs and two months for all other Medicaid programs. While there are various situations where Retroactive Medicaid coverage comes into play, Retroactive Medicaid is particularly important for older adults who require long-term care before their Medicaid eligibility can be finalized.

This shorter coverage window could leave older adults more vulnerable during sudden illness or hospitalization, increasing the risk of large unpaid medical bills, delays in care, and barriers to timely nursing facility admission. It may also increase the likelihood of unnecessary institutionalization if older adults are unable to access Medicaid-funded home and community-based services before their eligibility is finalized.

Significance

The financial impact of this policy change is especially concerning given the high cost of nursing home care. The table below displays the average cost and reimbursement rates associated with nursing homes in Lackawanna, Luzerne, Wayne,

and Wyoming Counties. In the region, daily nursing home rates are substantial, while Medicaid reimbursement rates fall below the rate for private or semi-private rooms. If retroactive eligibility is shortened beginning in 2027, older adults who require nursing home care before their applications are approved may face significant uncovered costs if not made aware of these changes.

This change to Medicaid will impact the regions' aging population. According to the United States Census five-year estimates in 2024, 19.5 percent of the population in Pennsylvania is over 65 years of age. The four-county area falls slightly above this with numbers around 20 percent, and Wayne County reporting a notable higher rate at 25.6 percent.

As Pennsylvania's population continues to age, reductions in retroactive Medicaid eligibility may place increased financial strain on older adults and their families, particularly during medical emergencies or transitions into long-term care. Policymakers and stakeholders should consider the implications of this change to ensure older Pennsylvanians are not left without critical coverage during periods of vulnerability.

Sources:

- [1] [Eldercare Resource Planning](https://www.eldercareresourceplanning.org/medicaid-faq/benefits/retroactive/). (2026, January 5). Retroactive Medicaid: Benefits, eligibility and the application process.
- [2] [Justice in Aging](https://justiceinaging.org/hr1-reduces-medicaid-retroactive-eligibility-starting-in-2027/) (2026) H.R. 1 Reduces Medicaid Retroactive Eligibility Starting in 2027

Nursing Home Cost and Reimbursement by County						
County	Number of Facilities	Private Room Daily Charge	Semi-Private Room Daily Charge	Other Type of Room Daily Charge	Medicaid Reimbursement Rate	Private Insurance Reimbursement Rate
Lackawanna	16	391.9	374.4	447.6	311.5	459.7
Luzerne	22	388.9	371.0	365.8	287.5	379.8
Wayne	3	331.3	319.0	NA	270.0	375.0
Wyoming	2	421.0	401.0	NA	NA	NA

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Health



STATE LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

A curated briefing of state legislative proposals and recent legislative actions

STATE BRIEFINGS

- Data Center Transparency
- Community Standards for Data Center Development
- Capitol Budget
- Lackawanna County Job Creation

Data Centers: Accountability & Transparency HB 2150

On April 13, House Bill 2150 received its third consideration and final passage in the Pennsylvania House before being sent to the Pennsylvania Senate. The bill addresses the rapid growth of data centers across Pennsylvania and the need for greater transparency regarding their resource use. As these facilities expand, they require significant amounts of electricity and water; however, there is currently limited publicly available information about their consumption or overall impact.

To address these concerns, the legislation would require data center developers and operators to report detailed information about their energy and water usage to the state. This information would be used to evaluate environmental and infrastructure impacts and help inform future policy decisions. Overall, the bill aims to promote accountability, support responsible planning, and ensure that Pennsylvania can manage the growth of this industry while protecting its natural resources and local communities.

Community Standards for Data Center Development HB 2151

As demand for cloud computing and data storage continues to grow, data centers, while economically important, can create disruptions such as noise, infrastructure strain, and other quality-of-life concerns for residents. This bill highlights gaps in statewide policy and the lack of consistent standards, which leave municipalities without clear guidance on how to regulate these developments effectively.

The goal is to strike a balance between supporting economic development and protecting community well-being, ensuring that data centers are built and operated responsibly while preserving quality of life in surrounding neighborhoods. On April 13, House Bill 2151 received its third consideration and final passage in the Pennsylvania House before being sent to the Pennsylvania Senate.

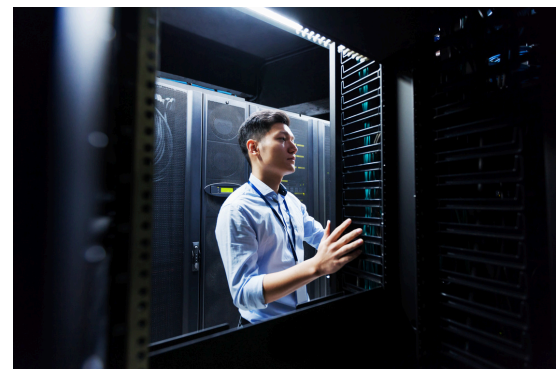
Capital Budget for 2026-2027 HB 2401

On April 27, the Pennsylvania House passed House Bill 2401 and sent it to the Pennsylvania Senate. House Bill 2401 provides for Pennsylvania's capital budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. The bill authorizes borrowing to support a range of investments, including public buildings, transportation improvements, redevelopment initiatives, and other capital projects across the Commonwealth. These investments are intended to support economic development, maintain and modernize public infrastructure, and enhance community assets while ensuring that state borrowing remains structured and within established limits.

Creating Jobs in Lackawanna County

On April 8, Governor Josh Shapiro announced that Pennsylvania secured a \$15 million private investment from Premier Brands of America to expand the company's manufacturing operations within the Commonwealth. As part of the project, the company will open its first Pennsylvania facility, supported by a state funding package aimed at attracting new business and strengthening economic development. The investment reflects broader efforts to position Pennsylvania as a competitive destination for manufacturing growth and private-sector expansion.

The new manufacturing facility will be located in Lackawanna County, create 58 full-time jobs, and redevelop a previously vacant industrial site. The project will contribute to local revitalization while enhancing the company's production capacity and supply chain.





STATE LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

A curated briefing of state legislative proposals and recent legislative actions

STATE BRIEFINGS

- Mixed-Use Housing Development Pilot
- Residential Economic Development
- First-time Homebuyers Savings

Affordable Housing through Mixed-Use Pilot Program

On May 5, Governor Josh Shapiro announced a \$10 million investment to expand affordable housing through the Pennsylvania Mixed-Use Housing Development Pilot Program. This initiative supports the development and redevelopment of mixed-use properties that include residential housing, helping to increase the supply of affordable homes while revitalizing communities. The funding will support multiple projects and is expected to create more than 1,400 new housing units, reflecting strong demand for housing resources across the Commonwealth.

This investment directly supports Pennsylvania's first-ever Housing Action Plan, which outlines a comprehensive strategy to address the state's housing shortage by building and preserving homes, reducing barriers to development, and expanding access to affordable housing. The pilot program represents an early implementation of that plan by combining targeted funding with development incentives to accelerate housing production and promote long-term economic stability across Pennsylvania.

Residential Economic Redevelopment

Senate Bill 1278 proposes the creation of a Residential Economic Development District (REDD) Grant Program to better align housing development with major economic growth across Pennsylvania. By establishing a dedicated grant program, the bill aims to ensure that the housing supply keeps pace with workforce and population growth.

Under the proposal, state funding would support local governments that partner with developers to build housing near significant job-creating projects. To qualify, communities would be encouraged to adopt pro-housing policies, such as modernized zoning, streamlined permitting, and site readiness improvements.

First-time Homebuyers Savings Accounts

Senate Bill 803 proposes the creation of a First-Time Homebuyer Savings Account Program in Pennsylvania to help more residents achieve homeownership. The legislation responds to declining rates of first-time homebuyers and rising financial barriers, particularly the challenges of saving for a down payment and closing costs. By establishing tax-advantaged savings accounts dedicated specifically to home purchases, the bill aims to make it easier for individuals and families to prepare financially to buy their first home. As of May 6, Senate Bill 803 received its first consideration by the Urban Affairs and Housing Committee.





FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

A curated briefing of federal legislative proposals and recent legislative actions

FEDERAL BRIEFINGS

- 119th Congress Overview
- Current Landscape of Bills and Resolutions

119th Congress Overview

Since the 119th Congress (2025–2026) convened in January 2025, 9,044 bills have been proposed in the House and 4,627 in the Senate. The House has introduced more simple resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and joint resolutions than the Senate – 1,324, 106, and 189, respectively, compared with 754, 33, and 193. Conversely, the Senate has submitted significantly more amendments than the House, with 5,450 compared with 222. Since the beginning of 2025, 93 pieces of public legislation have been enacted. Only two private laws, both related to awarding the Medal of Honor, have been passed, although 13 private bills have been introduced.

Congressional activity has been most prevalent in the policy areas of health, with 1,785 bills and resolutions; armed forces and national security, with 1,267; and government operations and politics, with 1,174. Other frequently addressed areas continuing into 2026 include international affairs, taxation, and crime and law enforcement. By contrast, relatively few measures have addressed animals or water resources development, each of which has seen fewer than 100 bills and resolutions. [1]

Current Landscape of Bills and Resolutions Proposed in Congress

Approximately seven percent of the 16,264 bills and resolutions introduced during the 119th Congress are expected to become law. To date, 95 bills have been signed by the President and enacted. In addition, 345 bills and joint resolutions (which require approval by both chambers of Congress) have been enacted or incorporated into other legislation. Since the start of the year, 30 bills and resolutions have failed to pass, and two additional bills were vetoed following unsuccessful override attempts in the House.

Health has been the primary focus of introduced legislation during this period, with 1,680 bills and resolutions categorized within health-related policy areas. These include health care coverage and access (122 bills), health care costs and insurance (100), program administration and funding (93), Medicare (77), and health personnel (80).

Overall, 14,168 bills were introduced, with 500 passing the House and 127 passing the Senate. Additionally, 636 bills and resolutions have received substantial numbers of votes in one of the two chambers. Of the 95 measures signed into law by the President, 24 related to Native Americans, public lands, and natural resources. Twenty-two addressed armed forces and national security, as well as crime and law enforcement. Another 18 concerned financial matters, including foreign trade, the economy, and taxation. Fifteen focused on energy, environmental protection, science, technology, and communications. Government operations and politics, as well as commerce, each accounted for two enacted measures. Agriculture and food, health, housing and community development, immigration, international affairs, law, social welfare, sports and recreation, and transportation and public works each had one law enacted. The subject matter of two enacted bills was not published on the website.

The five most recent legislative actions (as of May 2026) include:

- An amendment to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) Amendments Act of 2008 (S. 4465) that prolongs the authority provided under Title VII, which governs the electronic collection and surveillance of information relevant to foreign intelligence.
- An amendment to the FISA Amendments Act of 2008 (H.R. 8322) that extends Title VII through April 30, 2026, and incorporates provisions from the Protect Liberty and End Warrantless Surveillance Act of 2026 (H.R. 7816).
- Legislation setting aside or waiving the 60-day congressional notification requirement for the promotion of Captain Cody Khork within the United States Army (S. 4138).
- The Small Business Innovation and Economic Security Act (S. 3971), which expands the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs, along with related pilot programs.
- The Semiquincentennial Congressional Time Capsule Act (S. 3705), which establishes a time capsule to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States.[2]



FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

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FEDERAL BRIEFINGS

- Actions Taken by President

Recent Actions Taken by President

A total of 549 presidential actions have been documented since May 26, 2026. Several of the most recent executive orders focus on financial policy, including protections against fraud, abuse, and structural credit risks, as well as the incorporation of financial technology innovation. Other executive orders address national security and foreign relations, retirement savings options, federal contracting, and agency performance, including efforts to increase transparency regarding federal spending.

Additional recent executive actions include presidential nominations and appointments submitted to the Senate in May 2026. These nominations include positions such as the Office of Special Counsel, Under Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Member of the National Mediation Board, Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, and Member of the National Credit Union Administration Board. Other nominations were made for positions related to transportation, education, and science and mathematics, including Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Member of the Surface Transportation Board, Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration, and Inspector General of the Department of Education. Additional nominations were submitted for judicial positions, including District Judge and Circuit Judge.

Recent presidential proclamations include actions to carry out provisions and conditions contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026, related to trade affecting countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean. Another proclamation issued in early April modified certain pharmaceutical materials and ingredients pursuant to the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. Other recent proclamations recognized Memorial Day, Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, Military Spouse Day, Victory Day for World War II, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, Jewish American Heritage Month, National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend, National Foster Care Month, and Henry Clay Day.

The most recent presidential memorandum authorized Bridger Pipeline Expansion LLC to construct, connect, operate, and maintain pipeline facilities at a crossing between the state of Montana and Canada. [3]

Sources

- 1 <https://www.congress.gov/browse>
- 2 <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/>
- 3 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/>



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