

NEWS:

Bill Seeks to Increase Number of Primary Care Practitioners in Delaware



Increasing the number of primary care physicians and nurse practitioners serving Delawareans is the goal of a bipartisan bill released from committee this week.

Sponsored by State Reps. David Bentz (D-Newark-Christina) and Bryan Shupe (R-Milford South), [the measure](#) would create a program that could award education loan repayment grants to new primary care providers of up to \$50,000 per year for a maximum of 4 years.

Organizations eligible to apply for grants on behalf of their new primary care providers would need to be located in areas of need and accept Medicare and Medicaid participants.

Rep. Shupe said the program would be funded through a public-private partnership. The state would dedicate up to \$1 million to the initiative, with Delaware health insurers contributing a matching amount.

According to 2018 data cited by Rep. Shupe, there are approximately 228 primary care physicians downstate, compared to 587 in New Castle County. Expressed in terms of population, Kent and Sussex counties have a combined 42% of the state's residents, but only 28% of its doctors.

A [2016 federal government study](#) projected a growing gap between demand for primary care physicians in Delaware and availability, which is part of a national trend.



State Rep. Bryan Shupe

The nation's aging population is cited as one of the major factors driving demand. The U.S. population is expected to grow by 10% over the next 12 years, but the number of Americans age 65 and over will jump by 48% during the same period.

State House Republicans -- Reps. Ruth Briggs King, Kevin Hensley, & Michael Smith -- are among the bill's co-sponsors.