



ADDRESS THE CRITICAL PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE SHORTAGE
Congress Should Fund Authorized Loan Repayment Program at HRSA in FY24

| Program | Appropriations Bill | Agency | FY23 Appropriation | FY24 President's Budget | FY24 Recommendation |
|--|---------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program | Labor-HHS | Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) | N/A | N/A | \$100 million |

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and worsened what has become a dire public health workforce shortage. A 2021 study estimated that the public health workforce is operating at a deficit of 80,000, and that's just for providing the minimum standard of public health services.¹ The shortage is only anticipated to grow; according to one study, more than one in four public health employees said they are considering leaving their job.² Congress recognized the severity of this workforce shortage and amended Section 776 of the Public Health Service Act as part of the PREVENT Pandemics Act in the FY23 appropriations process. This program, authorized at \$100 million per year, will allow a student in an accredited institution of higher education or school of public health in the final semester (or equivalent) of a program leading to a certificate or degree, including a master's or doctoral degree, in public health, epidemiology, laboratory sciences, data systems, data science, data analytics, informatics, statistics, or another subject matter related to public health, to receive up to \$50,000 in student loan repayment benefits.

Funding Recommendation: ASPPH recommends \$100 million in FY2024 to create the Public Health Workforce Loan Repayment Program within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Justification: Student loan debt is a major obstacle to students seeking careers in governmental public health due to low-paying, entry-level jobs that are available in health departments, but schools and programs of public health are where future professionals are trained. Preliminary data show that, for master's level training, the median level of federal student debt was \$44,479 compared to median earnings one year following degree completion of \$52,878. Loan repayment will strengthen the capacity of the public health workforce with the next generation of professionals who have educational training in public health and related disciplines. This is a vital program to help public health graduates make significant contributions to advance the field of public health practice, particularly in preparation for the next public health crisis. Funding for a public health-specific loan repayment program at HRSA will be critical for recruitment and retention in the public health workforce.

About ASPPH: ASPPH is the voice of accredited academic public health, representing schools and programs accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). Our mission is to advance academic public health by mobilizing the collective power of our members to drive excellence and innovation in education, research, and practice. Our schools and programs train the next generation of public health professionals.

¹ de Beaumont Foundation. Staffing up: workforce levels needed to provide basic public health services for all Americans. Bethesda, MD: de Beaumont Foundation; 2021. <https://debeaumont.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Staffing-Up-FINAL.pdf>

² de Beaumont Foundation. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: rising stress and burnout in public health. Bethesda, MD: de Beaumont Foundation; 2022. https://debeaumont.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2022/03/Stress-and-Burnout-Brief_final.pdf