

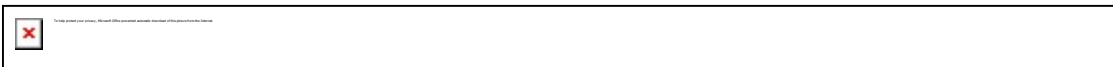
## Jonny F. Hipp (NCHD)

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**Sent:** Friday, April 19, 2024 2:13 PM  
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## The Demand for Physicians in Texas

*Column by Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa, April 2024*

It's no surprise that Texas, with its booming economy and vast opportunities, has one of the fastest-growing populations in the nation. As more people move to the Lone Star State, we are faced with intensifying challenges regarding accessibility to physicians, which have consistently been in short supply.

While the shortage of physicians isn't new or unique to Texas, projections show that our physician distribution lags compared to other states. By 2032, Texas could be short over 10,000 physicians if current trends remain. Other major drivers of the shortage include an aging population that requires increasingly complex care, medical school debt, burnout following the pandemic, and a significant portion of the current physician workforce reaching retirement age.

As lawmakers, we are constantly evaluating how we can increase the supply of high-quality physicians to help achieve our ultimate goal of providing accessible healthcare to all Texans. With 16 medical schools across the state, 7 of which have opened since 2016, the Legislature has continued its commitment to bolstering the physician workforce for generations to come.

However, providing more opportunities for medical school is just one part of the equation. With more students graduating from medical school, it is critical that the state provides adequate opportunities for training through residency programs. Without enough residency slots, students are leaving the state for other graduate medical education programs, some of whom will never return. In response to this trend, the Legislature set a target ratio of 1.1 to 1 for the number of first-year residency positions compared to graduating medical students. Meeting this target would allow all Texas medical school graduates to pursue their residency training within the state, a factor known to boost the likelihood of physicians staying in Texas to practice medicine after completing their training.

To further address the shortage of first-year residency positions, the Legislature initiated several new programs in 2013, including the Unfilled Residency Position Program and the Resident Physician Expansion Program, and provided just over \$14 million in funding. During the following legislative session, legislators consolidated the various programs into the single Graduate Medical Education (GME) Expansion Program and increased funding to over \$49 million. Funding has significantly increased over the years and most recently, the Legislature appropriated over \$233 million for GME, indicating an increase of \$219 million since the GME Expansion Program's establishment. The GME Expansion Program has supported the creation of 508 new first-year residency positions between 2014 and 2023.

We've seen the impact of GME Expansion right here in the Rio Grande Valley. These funds have supported new residency positions in various specialties, like family medicine, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, neurology, psychiatry, general surgery, and more. Additionally, the UTRGV School of Podiatric Medicine, the first podiatry school in Texas, is now eligible for GME funding following the passage of House Bill 2509 during the 2021 Legislative session, which I proudly authored. These funds support residency slots for students to pursue careers in the medical and surgical care of the foot and ankle – an important specialization for the Valley due to its high incidence of diabetes and related diseases of the lower extremities.

More people means more healthcare needs and we must continue to invest in the education of physicians in all corners of the state. The Legislature has made GME Expansion a priority over the years, but the work is not done. As we move forward, we need to ensure that our medical schools and US/Texas students are a priority for GME funding. By further bolstering graduate medical education programs, we can ensure that medical school graduates have the opportunity to train in and ultimately serve the diverse communities across the state.

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