



# STRENGTHEN Texas' Physician WORKFORCE

Compared with other states,  
Texas ranks:

**41<sup>ST</sup>**

**Patient care physicians**  
per 100,000 population

**47<sup>TH</sup>**

**Primary care physicians**  
in patient care per 100,000 population

**48<sup>TH</sup>**

**General surgeons**  
in patient care per 100,000 population

**Texas has:**

**8.8%** of the U.S. population

**but only**

**7.1%** of U.S. active physicians.



Physicians Caring for Texans

## Background

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating and unprecedented impact on Texas' physician workforce. Nearly all of Texas' 60,000 physicians in active medical practice were affected, regardless of medical specialty, practice setting, or practice type. The damaging effects were sudden and unexpected, and have continued into 2021. Texas has not seen this degree of disruption in physician medical practices since World War II.

Demand for specialists to treat COVID-19 patients in hospital settings hit an all-time high, while patient demand for physicians in ambulatory settings dropped far below average. The off-and-on suspension of elective surgeries and medical procedures harmed physician practices in the surgical and procedural specialties. These suspensions also wrought havoc on the financial standing of hospitals and other health care facilities. Some physicians lost their jobs, while others suffered pay cuts and mandatory furloughs. In May, TMA's COVID-19 Impact Survey found that 63% of physicians had salaries reduced by 50% or more. A little more than two out of three Texas physicians (68%) reported a reduction in work hours.

The pandemic will change the physician workforce in Texas. Economic pressures may challenge the viability of physician practices just as they affect hospitals and other health care services. And hospitals may be forced to close residency programs. With three new medical schools, Texas will need MORE residency positions to maintain the target ratio of 1.1 graduate medical education (GME) slots per each medical school graduate, in hopes of keeping our graduates in state.

## TMA's Legislative Recommendations

- Stabilize physician practice viability by adopting state policies that restore a healthy physician practice environment, including payment policies that enable physicians to meet costs and stay in business; minimizing physician practice interruptions; and ensuring physicians have strong practice liability protections.
- Continue state support for the following critical physician workforce pipeline programs in the state's 2024-25 budget. In the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's budget: State GME Expansion Grant Program, State Rural Training Track Grant Program, State Physician Education Loan Repayment Program, Statewide Primary Care Preceptorship Program, Family Medicine Residency Program, and Joint Admission Medical Program. In the health-related institution bill patterns budget: formula funding for state medical education and formula funding for GME teaching costs.
- Maintain robust physician workforce data collection and analysis to monitor the impact of the pandemic on physician supply and distribution and on patient access to medical care.