

## Workforce Shortage of Rehabilitation Providers

The National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies (NARA) members, alongside numerous other rehabilitation providers, are experiencing a critical shortage of qualified rehabilitation professionals (Physical Therapists, Physical Therapy Assistants, Occupational Therapists, Occupational Therapy Assistants, and Speech Language Pathologists) to meet the increasing demands for rehabilitation services.

### The ongoing workforce shortage stems from several contributing factors including:

1. Experienced rehabilitation professionals transitioning to non-rehabilitation roles due to post-COVID-19 burnout.
2. Salary constraints resulting from continued reimbursement reductions.
3. Decreased enrollment in accredited universities leading to insufficient new graduates to fill open positions.
4. Escalating costs of education, making it increasingly burdensome for individuals to afford tuition expenses and manage escalating student loans.
5. The aging population, with longer lifespans, desiring to maintain active and independent daily lives for as long as possible
6. Survivors of premature births often experience developmental delays and physical challenges, requiring intensive early intervention services from qualified rehabilitation professionals.

*“From 2025 to 2030, we go from 6.5 million to about 8 million [80- to 84 year olds], and for the next five to 10 years, we grow another 2.5 million” Mark Parkinson, President & CEO American Health Care Association <sup>1</sup>*

### Consequences of the Shortage of Qualified Rehabilitation Professionals:

- Rising demands for higher wages and benefits lead to an escalation in the cost of services.
- Reduced access to care for beneficiaries, particularly affecting rural and underserved populations disproportionately.

### Recommendations to Congress:

NARA recognizes the shortage qualified rehabilitation professionals as equally critical to the shortage of nurses and physicians and urges Congress to support the following initiatives:

- **Support and Pass HR 4829** The Physical Therapist Workforce and Patient Access Act of 2023 which would allow physical therapists to participate in the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program, helping to ensure that individuals in rural and underserved areas have access to need therapy care.
- **Provide incentives** through scholarships and tuition reimbursement to encourage enrollment and support current students in therapy educational programs.
- **Establish mechanisms** to facilitate the hiring of qualified rehabilitation professionals from other countries with greater ease.

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*NARA is the trade association representing 100+ organizations consisting of over 90,000 healthcare professionals dedicated to providing a multitude of skilled rehabilitation therapy services to individuals in a variety of settings including inpatient, outpatient, skilled care, assisted living, educational systems, industry/occupational health.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mcknights.com/news/parkinson-forecasts-record-occupancy-massively-good-news-for-sector/>