

CHAPTER 186**(SJR 116)**

A JOINT RESOLUTION directing the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Eastern Kentucky University to coordinate a search for actionable solutions to physician shortages and to explore and expand health care opportunities in medically underserved areas in collaboration with community, state agency, professional associations, and other stakeholders.

WHEREAS, over 75 percent of physicians practice in urban areas in Kentucky, leaving many counties with a shortage of physicians; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Health and Human Services has designated 40 counties as health professional shortage areas for primary care providers; and

WHEREAS, without local access to physicians, individuals in medically underserved areas are often compelled to travel long distances to other counties for health care, which may involve transportation and financial barriers and result in individuals going without care; and

WHEREAS, regular primary care physician visits serve as the first line in diagnosing illness and have been associated with a reduced number of hospitalizations and emergency room department visits; and

WHEREAS, the Association of American Medical Colleges reports that 57 percent of medical residents continued practicing medicine in their training state; and

WHEREAS, 38 percent of physicians practice medicine in the same state where they completed undergraduate medical education, and the rate is higher for public undergraduate medical school graduates, 46 percent; and

WHEREAS, according to the American Medical Association, the highest state retention rates are for family medicine, 64.6 percent, psychiatry, 64.5 percent, and pediatrics, 60 percent; and

WHEREAS, while some efforts have been made to increase medical residency placements and admissions into medical school in Kentucky, these efforts have not been nearly enough to meet the need; and

WHEREAS, greater efforts could be taken to encourage medical school graduates to complete their residencies in medically underserved areas so they might be compelled to continue practicing medicine and living there; and

WHEREAS, opportunities to expand health care access in medically underserved areas may include health care workforce diversification, innovative technology-enabled solutions and support, and attention to non-clinical health care needs and community-based care;

NOW, THEREFORE,

Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔Section 1. (1) The General Assembly directs the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Eastern Kentucky University to coordinate a search for actionable solutions to the physician shortages and to explore and expand health care opportunities in collaboration with community, state agency, professional associations, and other stakeholders. The search to find actionable solutions and explore opportunities to expand health care access shall focus on the:

- (a) Shortage of primary and specialty care physicians in medically underserved areas;
- (b) Chronic lack of access to physician care by medically underserved populations;
- (c) Retaining of physicians in medically underserved areas; and
- (d) Workforce, technological, and community-based opportunities to increase access to care.
- (2) The search and exploration shall include an examination of:
 - (a) Current actions being taken;
 - (b) Possibilities for building on current actions; and
 - (c) Innovative actions that may be taken, including but not limited to:

1. Sponsorship of community graduate medical education programs;
2. Growing graduate medical education sites in medically underserved areas;
3. Encouraging safe international physician recruitment;
4. Increasing basic administration reimbursement for recruitment and placement services of medical students, residents, and physicians;
5. Integrating workforce diversification in educational programs;
6. Expanding technological health care delivery options; and
7. Considering community-based medical models.

(3) The search and exploration shall include an analysis of any existing regulatory or statutory barriers to achieving a solution that attracts providers to medically underserved areas and does not limit modifications or expansions to medical education programs.

(4) The University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Eastern Kentucky University shall coordinate to develop a report to be submitted to the Legislative Research Commission by January 1, 2027, for referral to the General Assembly. The report shall:

(a) Describe and provide data on medically underserved areas and medically underserved populations by county on the:

1. Shortage of primary and specialty care physicians;
2. Lack of access to physician care; and
3. Retention of physicians;

(b) Provide an overview of:

1. Current actions;
2. Possibilities for building on current actions;
3. Innovative actions that may be taken; and
4. Regulatory or statutory barriers; and

(c) Provide detailed actional solutions and a discussion of opportunities to expand health care opportunities to address the physician shortages in medically underserved areas of Kentucky, including:

1. Agencies that may be responsible for the actions;
2. Resources needed to achieve the actions; and
3. A suggested timeframe for achieving the solutions.

➔Section 2. (1) The General Assembly finds that Kentucky continues to face a persistent and growing shortage of physicians and other clinicians, resulting in insufficient workforce capacity and impacting access to health care across the state, and strategic action is necessary to expand access to care. Training models at universities across the country and Kentucky have demonstrated that physicians are more likely to remain in or return to the communities in which they trained to establish their practice, specifically in communities where primary academic training activities will occur and will evolve into a collaborative partnership with local and regional public and private higher education institutions and health care providers to deliver education and clinical training.

(2) The General Assembly authorizes the University of Kentucky to develop a feasibility study to explore the persistent and growing shortage of physicians and other clinicians in collaboration with all health care workforce partners in and around the Owensboro region to take advantage of HealthForce Kentucky.

(3) The feasibility study may be provided to the General Assembly by December 1, 2026. Based upon the feasibility study, the General Assembly shall consider funding of up to \$10,000,000 in the 2027 Regular Session to address the findings of the feasibility study.

Signed by Governor April 17, 2026.