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AB 1671 – Rural Medical Provider Grant Program

Summary:

AB 1671 will create a new grant program for specific medical providers who offer full-time or part-time care in rural areas of California. This grant will be available beginning in 2026 and allows eligible medical professionals to receive up to \$10,000.

Existing Law:

Currently, there are a limited number of debt forgiveness programs specifically designed for medical providers, often targeting those who serve in underserved or rural communities. These programs may offer partial or full repayment of educational loans or other qualifying debts, providing an important incentive for medical professionals to work in areas with critical healthcare shortages. However, despite these provisions, California is still facing a shortage of providers in rural areas who are able to afford to offer consistent care. By offering a grant to help cover administrative, operational, and overhead costs, as well as support for continuing education and equipment needs, the state could reduce financial barriers for medical providers. This would not only encourage more practitioners to establish or maintain practices in underserved communities but also improve access to high-quality, reliable healthcare for residents who need it most."

Problem:

The shortage of medical care in rural areas has severe and far-reaching consequences for communities, leading to poorer health outcomes, economic challenges, and diminished quality of life. Without access to nearby healthcare, residents often delay or avoid essential medical treatments, resulting in higher mortality rates from preventable conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Pregnant individuals face elevated risks due to limited obstetric care, and longer emergency response times worsen outcomes for heart attacks, strokes, and injuries.

Insufficient healthcare access drives population decline, weakens local economies, and forces residents to travel long distances for even basic medical services. Moreover, reliance on emergency rooms for primary care contributes to skyrocketing healthcare costs for both individuals and the broader system. Implementing targeted incentives, such as grants or other support for physicians in rural communities, is critical to improving access, reducing disparities, and strengthening these vulnerable areas.

Solution:

By creating a grant program for physicians working in rural communities, AB 1671 helps address healthcare disparities by attracting and retaining medical professionals in underserved areas, ensuring residents have consistent access to primary and preventive care. This leads to earlier diagnoses, better



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management of chronic conditions, and improved maternal and infant health outcomes. Additionally, strengthening rural healthcare supports local economies by encouraging population stability, creating jobs, and sustaining businesses. With more providers available, patients can receive regular medical attention instead of relying on costly emergency rooms or traveling long distances, ultimately reducing healthcare expenses for both individuals and the system.

AB 1671 will provide eligible medical providers with grants of up to \$10,000 for offering full-time or part-time care to patients in rural communities, helping offset administrative, operational, and other practice-related costs

Eligible Professions:

- Physicians and Surgeons licensed by the medical board

- Dentists, Dental Surgeons, and Dental Hygienists
- Optometrists
- Osteopathic Physicians
- Clinical Psychologists
- Podiatrists
- Nurse Practitioners, Nurse Midwives, and Registered Nurses
- Physicians Assistants
- Chiropractors
- Speech Pathologists and Audiologists
- Physical Therapists
- Anesthesiologists
- Pharmacists

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