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# News Release

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## **States Lack Clear Agenda to Avoid Health Workforce Crises** ***AAHC finds that fragmented infrastructure, limited focus hamper state efforts***

WASHINGTON, May 29 - The latest report from the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC), *State Actions & the Health Workforce Crisis*, finds that states lack comprehensive and coordinated long-term planning for the health workforce and thus are ill-prepared to address an emerging national health workforce crisis.

Facing current and looming shortages of health professionals nationwide, states have established a variety of programs to boost workforce capacity. However, state initiatives are often focused on one profession (particularly nursing in recent years) or are targeted at rural or underserved areas. Rarely do states engage in long-range planning for the full spectrum of the health professions.

The paper, based on an analysis of published reports and interviews with state officials, examines the infrastructure for workforce decision-making, the locus of leadership on workforce policy, and current strategies to address workforce capacity in eight states: California, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, New York, and Texas. Growing concern about the health workforce has impelled all profiled states to take action. Promising initiatives are appearing as states support new degree programs in colleges and universities, promote health professions to K-12 students, provide scholarships and loan repayment programs, and develop career ladders for entry-level health professionals.

Yet the AAHC study finds that a fragmented infrastructure for decision-making and the absence of leadership at high governmental levels leaves many states without a mechanism to set a clear health workforce agenda. Some health workforce planning has emerged from other arenas, particularly higher education; university systems in Georgia and California have taken the lead in analyzing state health workforce needs and developing roadmaps to develop the health workforce.

The AAHC recommends that states:

- Ensure that the health workforce is a top priority in the state government;
- Develop a plan to consolidate health workforce activities within one permanent office or agency;
- Examine ways to develop and network state planning agencies across the nation with the ultimate goal of establishing and linking to a national federal health workforce center;
- Ensure that workforce initiatives take a broad view of the health professions;
- Promote health careers to K-12 students, bolster support for health professions schools, and promote faculty development.

"Thorough planning should align long-term needs with policies that provide comprehensive solutions," says AAHC President/CEO Steven A. Wartman, MD, PhD. "Together, academic health centers and state officials can lead the nation in building a functional and sustainable workforce for the future."

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