

3 Strengthen the Workforce

Address Provider Shortages

- ▶ Physician, nursing and allied health professional shortages are limiting access to care. Expanding training, increasing residency slots, and supporting recruitment and retention initiatives will help meet communities' growing needs. Ask Congress to enact the Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act (S.709/H.R.1585) for foreign-born providers to practice in rural and underserved areas, and the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act (H.R. 4731/S. 2439), which would add 14,000 Medicare-funded residency positions.

Enhance Workforce and Workplace Safety

- ▶ Violence against health care workers continues to rise. We urge policymakers to advance solutions that protect the workforce, strengthen emergency preparedness and ensure safe environments for both patients and providers. Congress should enact the Save Healthcare Workers Act (H.R. 3178/S. 1600), which provides protections similar to those in current law for flight crews, flight attendants and airport workers.

Support Workforce Well-being and Retention

- ▶ Hospitals are committed to supporting the mental, emotional and physical well-being of their teams. Federal policies that encourage resiliency, training and well-being programs help retain a strong and dedicated workforce. Congress should fund efforts to strengthen health care workers' well-being and programs to reduce the administrative burden on health care workers.

Protect Access to Health Professional Education

- ▶ Hospitals depend on a broad health care workforce. Proposed federal student loan borrowing limits would restrict access to advanced training and weaken the domestic pipeline. The Department of Education should define "professional student" to include roles such as nursing, social work, physician assistant, and physical and occupational therapy.

Exempt Health Care Workers from H-1B Visa Fee

- ▶ Workforce shortages threaten access to quality care, making foreign-trained professionals a critical short-term solution. Hospitals and health systems rely on H-1B visa holders in specialty occupations, and the Physicians and the Healthcare Workforce Act (H.R. 7961) would support hospitals by exempting foreign-trained health care workers from the \$100,000 H-1B visa filing fee established last year.



Resources to Support Your Advocacy Efforts



Visit the **American Hospital Association Action Center** at www.aha.org/actioncenter for resources to support your advocacy efforts on these and other priorities.



Advancing Health in America

2026

Advocacy Messages



America's hospitals and health systems provide healing, hope and care to patients and families in every community across the nation. Yet the ability to deliver reliable, high-quality care around the clock is facing significant challenges.

Your mission on Capitol Hill is to urge Congress to:

- 1 Protect Access to Care.**
Urge lawmakers to reject policies that would reduce access and enact key efforts that support patients' health.
- 2 Advance Affordability Solutions.**
Share how your organization is making care more affordable and efficient for patients. Highlight what goes into the costs of caring for patients 24/7 and offer solutions to enhance affordability across the health care system.
- 3 Strengthen the Workforce.**
Describe the challenges facing the health care workforce and provide actions to support care teams.

1 Protect Access to Care

Reject Site-neutral Payment Policies That Threaten Access

- ▶ Site-neutral payment policies would reduce access to critical health care services, especially in rural and other underserved communities.
- ▶ Hospital outpatient departments treat sicker, lower-income Medicare patients with more complex and chronic conditions than those treated in independent physician offices or ambulatory surgery centers; maintain emergency standby services such as ICUs; and are held to stricter regulatory and safety requirements than other care sites.
- ▶ Medicare already severely underpays hospitals — 83 cents for every dollar hospitals spend caring for Medicare patients.

Protect the 340B Drug Pricing Program

- ▶ The 340B program has a proven record of helping hospitals stretch limited federal resources to provide more comprehensive care and reach more patients.
- ▶ Congress created the 340B program to help hospitals address the problem of high drug prices, and that problem persists today.
- ▶ A 340B rebate model program would upend 30 years of precedent by changing the program's upfront discount model to a back-end rebate. These efforts would force hospitals to front large sums to drug companies, share burdensome amounts of data, and wait for rebates on discounts they are legally owed — disrupting cash flow, limiting access to medications and threatening community programs supported by 340B savings.

Mitigate Medicaid Reductions & Coverage Losses

- ▶ Urge Congress to mitigate upcoming Medicaid funding reductions and coverage losses that will reduce access to patient care and further strain hospital resources and services.

Support Rural Health Care

- ▶ Millions of Americans depend on rural hospitals as their sole access point for vital health care services.
- ▶ Congress should support rural access to care by extending key programs, including the enhanced low-volume adjustment and Medicare-dependent hospital program, both of which expire Dec. 31, 2026.
- ▶ Policymakers should ensure allocations from the Rural Health Transformation Program prioritize payments to hospitals for worker recruitment and retention, infrastructure and telehealth.

Increase Commercial Insurer Accountability

- ▶ Patients and providers are facing growing barriers created by some commercial insurance practices, such as delayed prior authorization, inappropriate denials and narrow networks. These actions also are taking clinicians away from patient care and adding billions in costs to the health care system.
- ▶ Congress should pass the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (H.R.3514/S.1816), which would streamline prior authorization requirements under Medicare Advantage plans, and the Medicare Advantage Prompt Pay Act (H.R.5454/S.2879), which would apply a federal prompt payment standard to MA plans.

2 Advance Affordability Solutions

Address the Rising Costs of Caring

- ▶ Escalating costs for labor, drugs and supplies, as well as rising uncompensated care, continue to strain hospital finances. All stakeholders have a role to play, and policymakers can support affordability by addressing the underlying cost drivers that threaten access and stability across the field.

Reduce Regulatory Burdens

- ▶ Congress and the Administration should simplify, align and modernize regulations allowing hospitals to focus on patient care, innovation and staffing.

Enact Solutions to Advance Affordability

- ▶ Hospitals are working to make care more affordable by increasing efficiencies, adopting innovative technologies and rethinking how care is delivered. These efforts include investing in care coordination programs that help patients better manage chronic diseases; using telehealth, remote monitoring and digital tools to help patients access care; and using EHRs and data-driven care models to help clinicians catch problems earlier, avoid duplicative tests and coordinate treatment more effectively.
- ▶ Congress should support solutions to make the health care system more affordable, including increasing capacity for preventive and primary care; lowering drug prices; reforming medical malpractice laws; supporting providers in transitioning to value-based care models; and increasing access to palliative care services.