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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2803

Testimony before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Member Day Hearing
Congresswoman Susie Lee (NV-03)

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Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Pallone, and members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to share my perspective on issues under the Committee's jurisdiction.

Southern Nevada, like many communities across the country, faces a dire health care provider shortage that is making it harder for people to access the services they need.

The U.S. is estimated to see a shortage of up to 86,000 physicians by 2036, including shortfalls in both primary and specialty care. Over 74 million Americans live in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), including Nevadans in every county in our state. Nevada ranks 45th in the country for active physicians per capita and 48th in the country for primary care physicians per capita. Our families and health care workers feel the impacts of this shortage every day.

That's why I lead the **Physicians for Underserved Areas Act (H.R. 870)** with Representative Troy Balderson (R-OH), who serves on this Committee. This bill would revise the federal graduate medical education (GME) process to give residency programs in areas with severe physician shortages a greater chance of gaining GME slots that become available when another resident-training hospital closes. The bill also updates the requirement for timely filling of slots so that hospitals must begin to fill slots within two years rather than three years. This incentivizes slots to be filled, and doctors trained, quicker.

Nevada graduates more medical students each year than there are GME slots in the state. This forces Nevada-trained providers to leave the state for their residency,

where they are unlikely to return, and further exacerbates Nevada's physician shortage.

Studies have shown that doctors are more likely to practice in the same state where they did their residency. By prioritizing areas most directly impacted by provider shortages in the allocation of GME slots, this bill is a critical step to improving access to care for communities in Nevada and across the country.

The provider shortage faced by our communities is also evident in shortages of registered nurses (RNs) and nursing school faculty that further undermine access to care.

Nevada currently has only 7.5 nurses per 1,000 people, the fifth worst ratio of nurses to served population in the country. In order to meet national population-to-provider averages, Nevada would need over 4,000 additional RNs and nearly 3,500 licensed practical nurses (LPNs). Additionally, in 2022, over 2,100 full-time faculty vacancies were reported in nursing schools across the country, meaning that there is an 8.8% nurse faculty vacancy rate nationwide.

To address these shortages, I lead the **Train More Nurses Act (H.R. 5052)** with Representatives Zach Nunn (R-IA) and Dina Titus (D-NV). This bill would ensure federal grants effectively address faculty shortages in nursing schools and support the nursing workforce, providing funding to communities that need it most as they combat nursing shortages.

Specifically, the bill would direct the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Labor to conduct a review of all nursing grant programs to find ways to increase faculty at nursing schools, particularly in underserved areas. The bill directs the Secretaries to submit a report on this review. It also requires recommendations for increased pathways for LPNs to become RNs and for nurses who have more than 10 years of clinical experience to become faculty at nursing schools, increasing the nursing pipeline in our communities.

I remain committed to working with my colleagues on this Committee to push forward common-sense solutions that ensure access to health care services, support our health workforce, and improve health outcomes for our communities. I encourage the Committee to provide full consideration to the Physicians for Underserved Areas Act and Train More Nurses Act.

Thank you again for providing this opportunity. I look forward to collaborating with the Committee to make life for Nevadans better.