

# Addressing California's Healthcare Gaps: A Grassroots Initiative for Physician Associate Advocacy

## Introduction/Background

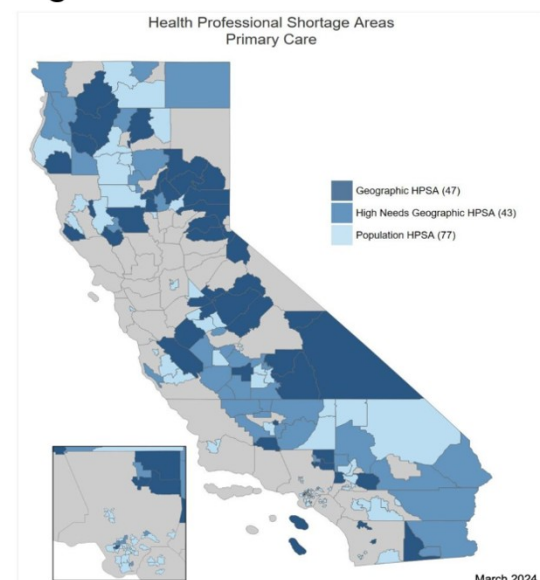
- California faces ongoing challenges in providing adequate care to underserved communities, with a staggering number of 633 healthcare shortage areas in 2024<sup>1</sup>.
- Physician Associates (PAs) play a crucial role in addressing these gaps, yet their full potential remains underutilized, given state-dependent limitations in scope and autonomy, especially in the medical deserts<sup>2</sup>.
- PA students launched a grassroots initiative in collaboration with California Academy of Physician Associates (CAPA) in 2025 to increase awareness among incumbent and newly-elected California legislators about the critical importance of PAs in healthcare delivery by coordinating constituent meetings.

## Methods

- In a span of 2 months, resources were developed to support students, including:
  - Email templates
  - Scheduling guides
  - Zoom Webinar with legislative talking points
- Participation was voluntary and open to all PA students and PA-C's in California.
- The goal was to facilitate meetings between PA students and their local legislators within 30 days of the webinar "launch".

## Results

- 56 participants in attendance at the Zoom webinar.
  - Roughly half PA-C, half PA-S, and a few pre-PAs. A CAPA lobbyist was also in attendance.
- 71 sign-ups by PA students and PA-Cs committed to meet with a local legislator.
- 35 contacts were made to assembly members and senators regarding the initiative.
- By the official conclusion of the project (March 2025), 14 participants reported involvement in meetings with legislative offices.



Map of Healthcare Shortage Areas in California  
Department of Healthcare and Access Information (HCAI)

**CALIFORNIA PAs-CAN!**  
Future and Current Physician Associates:  
**Collaborate in Advocacy Now!**

Informational Webinar  
January 7th, 2025

A PA-Student led  
grassroots initiative  
supported by: **CAPA**  
Empowering Healthcare

Zoom Webinar Slides Overviewing the Initiative



PA Students in front of CA State Capitol in Sacramento

## Summary

- Successful initiatives that involve advocating for awareness of the PA profession are often through volunteer-led, grassroots efforts.
- It is evident that there is interest in PA advocacy in California, however established, standardized efforts should be continued further to help address barriers in increasing awareness and advancement of the PA profession.

## Discussion/Conclusions

- Advocacy is critical for advancing the PA profession and expanding PA practice rights.
- Students are often at the forefront of activism and are important proponents in fostering collective change for the PA profession.
- There is a need for structured opportunities and resources to help PA students engage with legislators and promote their profession.

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Designated Health Professional Shortage Areas Statistics. Bureau of Health Workforce Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); 2024. Accessed January 8, 2025. <https://data.hrsa.gov/default/generatehpsaquarterlyreport>
- <sup>2</sup>Bullard RD, Johnson GS. Environmentalism and Public Policy: Environmental Justice: Grassroots Activism and Its Impact on Public Policy Decision Making. *Journal of Social Issues*. 2000;56(3):555-578. doi:10.1111/0022-4537.00184
- <sup>3</sup>DePalma SM, DePalma M, Kolhoff S, Smith NE. Medical Malpractice Payment Reports of Physician Assistants/Associates Related to State Practice Laws and Regulations. *Journal of Medical Regulation*. 2023;109(4):27-37. doi:10.30770/2572-1852-109.4.27
- <sup>4</sup>Ann Christopher M, Duhl J, J. Rosati R, M. Sheehan K. Advocacy for Vulnerable Patients: How Grassroots Organizations Can Influence Health Care Policy. *AJN, American Journal of Nursing*. 2015;115(3):66-69. doi:10.1097/01.NAJ.0000461810.34602.58