

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 2509

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Hearing Date: April 1, 2021 8:00 AM

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Sergio Contreras

Rio Grande Valley Partnership

Weslaco, TX

I and my organization supports HB2509 because it will help increase medical care for diabetic patients in the RGV.

Podiatrists are needed across the State of Texas. The RGV Partnership organization supports HB2509 and would welcome medical residency training of podiatrists in the RGV.

Raudel Garza

Harlingen Economic Development Corporation

Harlingen, TX

The Rio Grande Valley is one of the least-served regions in terms of medical doctors per capita. If one is talking about specialty areas, that number skyrockets! Due to a high concentration of diabetes in our population, podiatrists are needed here. Unfortunately, there is a wide gap in the number of podiatrists available and the number of patients. The ratio needs to be reduced. HB2509 is one of those bills that needs all the support it can get and the Development Corporation of Harlingen, Inc. whole-heartedly supports Representative Lucio's and Senator Hinojosa's efforts to get this bill passed.

Beverly Loftus, Commercial Development Manager

Harlingen Economic Development Corporation

Harlingen, TX

The Rio Grande Valley and Texas require more podiatrists to serve the growing number of patients in need of podiatry care. I/my organization supports HB2509 and would welcome medical residency training of podiatrists in the Rio Grande Valley.

MaryAnn Villarreal, Mrs.

Harlingen Economic Development Corporation

Harlingen, TX

There is a great need for more medical support in the podiatric area, as I have my mother and sister that are in great need of that specialty field. The foot, ankle and the knee as planters foot, fishers etc.

Cynthia Sakulenzki

RGV HIspanic Chamber of Commerce

McAllen, TX

The RGV Hispanic Chamber of Commerce not only focuses on small business, but education, government issues, international affairs, etc. Health is one of our major concerns. Here in the Rio Grande Valley, 3 out of 4 people are afflicted with diabetes. The feet are very much affected by diabetes. Podiatrists play a very important part in a diabetic's life. We, and the whole state of

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Texas are in need of many more Podiatrists. A medical residency training of podiatrists here at the UTRGV is an exceptional way to help fill the need for more podiatrists. Please know that the RGV Hispanic Chamber is in total support of this bill.

Linda Burke

Burke Children's Dentistry

Harlingen, TX

I would support HB 2509. We here in the Rio Grande Valley have a high number of diabetic patients that are in desperate need of care from a podiatrist. For this reason, I would welcome a medical residency for podiatrists in our area.

Ronnie Larralde, Executive Director

Edinburg Chamber of Commerce

Edinburg, TX

As the Executive Director of the Edinburg Chamber of Commerce, I would like to express my full support for HB2509. According to the CDC, Diabetes Affects Hispanics/Latinos at a greater rate. Over their lifetime, US adults overall have a 40% chance of developing type 2 diabetes. But if you're a Hispanic/Latino American adult, your chance is more than 50%, and you're likely to develop it at a younger age.

The Edinburg Chamber of Commerce supports HB2509 because it will help increase medical care for diabetic patients in the RGV. The Edinburg Chamber supports HB2509 and would welcome medical residency training of podiatrists in the RGV. I want to thank the House for its leadership and commitment to education in the RGV. If there is anything that we can do to assist in these efforts, please contact me at (956) 383-4974.

Rebecca Ramirez-Stocker, Collective Impact Director

Unidos Contra la Diabetes

McAllen, TX

As the Collective Impact Director of Unidos Contra la Diabetes (UCD), a four county collaborative effort in the Rio Grande Valley aimed to reduce new instances of diabetes, I strongly support HG 2509. As you know, diabetes impacts our community at an extremely high rate. If uncontrolled, those who have been diagnosed with this preventable chronic disease may be faced with additional ailments, including losses of limbs. Unidos Contra la Diabetes supports HB 2509 because it increases medical care for diabetic patients in the Rio Grande Valley. I greatly thank you for the acknowledgement and effort placed on the need for podiatrists in our community and the medical residency training they could receive.

Diana Ramirez

Rio Grande Valley Diabetes Association/Executive Director

McAllen, TX

I support this bill. The Rio Grande Valley is one of the poorest areas in the state and is in need of more medical education. Diabetes is an epidemic in this area and there is a high number of patients with amputations and foot issues. It is very important that we receive help to enhance the graduate medical education program for the practice of podiatric medicine in Texas and the Rio Grande Valley.

Ann Cass, Ms

Proyecto Azteca

McAllen, TX

Because I work with the residents in the Hidalgo County colonias I know how endemic diabetes is among our families. While we

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work hard at prevention, the fact remains many family members already have the disease which leads to sores, particularly on their feet, untreated which results in amputation. I coordinate the RGV Health Working Group which includes all the safety net clinics. We had a health summit last year on access to secondary care which is lacking for the 300,000 some people without insurance in Hidalgo County. Clinic physicians and EDs shared that there is no place for patients to be sent for wound care and podiatric treatment. We really, really, need this residency program at UTRGV SOM. Everyone seems to know someone who is missing one or both feet, or one or both legs. It would be great if everyone knew someone who was able to receive treatment from a podiatrist or podiatric resident and had a positive outcome.

Lucy Torres

Nuestra Clinica del Valle.

McAllen, TX

This bill will help increase the specialty care for diabetic patients in the RGV. In 2020, Nuestra Clinica del Valle served 24,834 patients and 30% were diabetics.

Patricia Rosenlund, Executive Director

Easterseals Rio Grande Valley

McAllen, TX

On behalf of Easterseals RGV organization, I support HB2509 because it will help increase medical care for diabetic patients in the RGV.

Shirley Hu

UT Health Houston School of Public Health and School of Biomedical Informatics, UTRGV School of Medicine

McAllen, TX

As a resident of the Rio Grande Valley where many residents are uninsured or underinsured, and 2/3 have either diabetes or pre-diabetes we need accessible affordable health care and good preventative health programs. Our people have a high rate of poverty, which affects housing transportation and wellness. Currently staff in UTRGV School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry I can say that we can not separate body from mind, nor health/ill health from economic prosperity. I urge you to support the DPM residency program and funding for it. Thank you

Josh Mejia, Mr.

Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation

Brownsville, TX

The Brownsville Community Improvement Corporation ("BCIC") fully supports HB2509 because it will help increase medical care for diabetic patients and expand opportunities for continued economic development in the healthcare industry for the Rio Grande Valley. The healthcare industry has brought in 43% of new jobs in the Rio Grande Valley over the past decade. This statistic alone not only points towards a viable pursuit for the region to grow economically but also highlights an increase in demand for healthcare services for the region.

Diabetes and "pre-diabetes" continue to be categorized as an epidemic in our region affecting our population which is predominantly hispanic. The ongoing side effects of such conditions include enhanced medical attention and treatment to our growing workforce. A workforce that continues to service our growing industries in the region. Based on these conditions, there should be no doubt that the needs of the region are evident and clear.

The solution is simple. Expand our healthcare services to include a pediatric school which will ultimately benefit our historically underserved region.

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The University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley ("UTRGV") has worked diligently in expanding their educational curriculum to include medical education with the understanding that students graduating from such programs will help diversify the region's healthcare industry and its outreach. I have personally witnessed UTRGV's continued work in expanding partnerships with recognizable medical institutions to ensure its medical education is relevant to the region's need which will only further enhance this future program's effectiveness in addressing both quality-of-life and economic needs in the region. As an economic developer for a "type b" or "4b" economic development organization, I could not be more aligned with this legislative effort to address two major challenges that currently impede our residents to achieve the socioeconomic mobility they seek to desire.

Podiatrists are needed across the State of Texas. The BCIC fully supports HB2509 and would welcome medical residency training of podiatrists in the Rio Grande Valley.