

EMPOWER for health act highlights a rare but important bipartisan priority: supporting us all as we age

28 October 2019

Geriatrics Academic Career Awards

The GACA program, recently reestablished by the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) after being eliminated in 2015 as part of a consolidation of several geriatrics training programs, provides vital support for hundreds of geriatrics healthcare providers and educators.

A 2017 study in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* explores the impact the program had on...

GERIATRICS HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS CAREGIVERS OLDER ADULTS

THE GACA HAD A... **FAR-REACHING IMPACT**

WHY IT MATTERS
The 220 GACA recipients trained between 41,000 and 65,000 healthcare professional colleagues since 1998.

More than 80% of GACA survey respondents reported leveraging the GACA to "protect" dedicated time for developing courses, workshops, publications, and other training activities.

Curtailing such a program endangers care quality, care costs, and care professional expertise across the U.S.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The GACA in many ways made my career possible. As a minority female, it gave me entrance into an academic world that often seems unattainable and closed."

Potential Learners Reached by GACA Awardees



Introduced by Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-III.) and House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Michael Burgess (R-TX) earlier this year, the EMPOWER for Health Act both reauthorizes and funds two important initiatives--the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and the Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACAs)--under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, the federal mechanism for supporting health professions education and training. Credit: (c) 2019, American Geriatrics Society

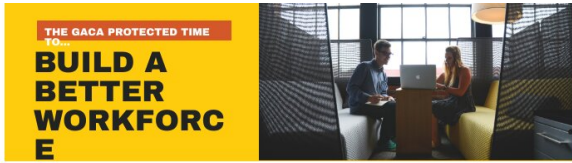
Among several legislative proposals slated for a vote today in the U.S. House of Representatives,

one in particular offers a glimpse at something unique: Bipartisan collaboration and support. But as experts from the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) observe, that may be because the Educating Medical Professionals and Optimizing Workforce Efficiency and Readiness (EMPOWER) for Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 2781) stands poised to accomplish something as unique as it is necessary: Putting federal power behind training the health workforce we need as we age.

"The future we're working for at the AGS—a future when all older Americans have access to high-quality, person-centered care—begins by building the workforce to make that possible, and by ensuring that workforce can connect us to the tools and supports we need as we grow older together," observed Nancy E. Lundebjerg, MPA, CEO of the AGS. "The EMPOWER for Health Act will make that possible by supporting two [training programs](#) that are as critical to our future as they are widely supported, thanks in large part to the bipartisan efforts that will make this bill law."

Introduced by Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-III.) and House Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Michael Burgess (R-TX) earlier this year, the bill both reauthorizes and funds two important initiatives—the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) and the Geriatrics Academic Career Awards (GACAs)—under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act, the federal mechanism for supporting [health](#) professions education and training. Both the legislation itself and the individual programs it supports draw considerable insight from the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA), a collaborative comprised of more than 30 member organizations co-convened by the AGS. Like EWA, the EMPOWER for Health Act now reflects the diverse expertise of millions of health professionals

who support older Americans—and understand the best path forward for sustaining that momentum.



WHY IT MATTERS

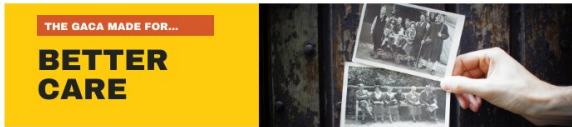
96% of survey respondents cited GACA-supported opportunities as being primary contributors to their career success.

More than 80% of respondents were promoted during or after receiving their awards.

90%+ of survey respondents noted that the GACAs improved their teaching, leadership, and collaborative skills.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"My entire career was influenced positively by the GACA. I was given protected time to develop curricula, to network with other educators, to receive training, and to become a more effective educator."



WHY IT MATTERS

More than 50% of the GACA awardees surveyed reported an improvement in their provider skills and education.

Nearly 25% of respondents were confident their efforts tangibly improved clinical care, satisfaction with the health system, and health outcomes.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The GACA contributed significantly to my ability to design and lead a program that will directly impact the care that people living with dementia will receive in the future."



represent an essential complement to the GWEP. By supporting time for professional development and instructional advancement, the GACAs ensure we can equip early career clinician-educators to become leaders in geriatrics training and research.

As Lundebjerg summarizes: "The GWEP provides support for the current transformation of primary care, while the GACA develops the next generation of innovators to improve care outcomes and care delivery." "Together," she concluded, "these platforms play a critical role in developing the [workforce](#) we all need as we age."

The GACAs & The GWEP: Initiatives for Funding the Healthcare Workforce We Need as We Age

In July 2019, HRSA announced 48 five-year grant-funded Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Programs (GWEPs) located in 35 states and 2 territories. In August 2019, HRSA announced funding for 26 GACAs across 16 states.

- ✓ The GWEP is focused on helping to transform primary care for older adults by providing geriatrics training.
- ✓ The GACA is focused on developing clinician educators in training the next generation of geriatrics healthcare professionals.

Additional funding will allow HRSA to expand the number of GWEPs and GACAs and move towards closing the current geographic and demographic gaps in geriatrics workforce training. Both the GACA and the GWEP are essential to the future of high-quality, person-centered care.

BIPARTISAN, BICAMERAL LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH & AUTHORIZE THE GWEP & GACAs



S. 299 & H.R. 2781

Geriatrics advocates have offered a ringing endorsement for two pieces of legislation critical to the GWEP and the GACAs.

Introduced by Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Bob Casey (D-Pa) in January 2019, the Geriatrics Workforce Improvement Act (S. 299), is a proposal in the U.S. Senate to ensure communities across the U.S. have access to health professionals and other critical supports improving care for us all.

The bill echoes bipartisan legislation, the Educating Medical Professionals and Optimizing Workforce Efficiency and Readiness (EMPOWER) for Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 2781) introduced in May 2019 by Reps. Jan Schakowsky (D-III.) and Michael Burgess (R-TX) in the U.S. House of Representatives.



Both proposals would authorize funding for and enhance the GWEP and GACA Programs.

Email, call, tweet, and text your legislators to let them know you support S. 299 and H.R. 2781.



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Powered by grantees working on local solutions to workforce shortages across the U.S., for example, the GWEPs educate and engage the broader frontline workforce and family caregivers, and focus on opportunities to improve the quality of care delivered to older adults. And as a program rooted in sustaining geriatrics education, the GACAs

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Society

Across both these efforts, the EMPOWER for Health Act would authorize funding of \$51 million annually through 2024. This would allow current and future GWEP and GACA awardees to:

- Educate and engage with [family caregivers](#) by training providers who can assess and address their care needs and preferences.
- Promote interprofessional team-based care by transforming clinical training environments to integrate geriatrics and primary care delivery systems.
- Improve the [quality of care](#) delivered to older adults by providing education to families and caregivers on critical care challenges such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.
- Support clinician-educators engaged in geriatrics education and research to develop the next generation of innovators to improve care outcomes and care delivery.

With critical endorsements on both sides of the aisle, the EMPOWER for Health Act is expected to meet with swift approval in the U.S. House of Representatives. The legislation will then be sent to the Senate for a final vote in Congress en route to President Trump for his endorsement.

Provided by American Geriatrics Society

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