

To the members of the Patient Protection Commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide public comment on the pivotal and critical policy areas that are impacting Nevada healthcare, especially related to workforce. As you are likely aware, 2021 data shows that Nevada ranked 45th in the nation for the ratio of active physicians to the population with 218 per 100,000 residents, compared with the national average of 272 per 100,000 residents.<sup>1</sup> In addition, data from the Nevada Health Workforce Research Center shows that 2.3 million Nevadans “reside in primary care health professional shortage areas (HPSA).”<sup>2</sup> These statistics demonstrate the severe situation Nevada is facing in addressing significant workforce shortages, something that the commission is intended to help address.

We represent Comagine Health, a national, nonprofit, health care consulting firm. We work collaboratively with patients, providers, payers and other stakeholders to reimagine, redesign and implement sustainable improvements in the health care system. As a trusted, neutral party, we work in our communities to address key, complex health and health care delivery problems. In all our engagements and initiatives, we draw upon our expertise in quality improvement, care management, health information technology, analytics and research. Comagine Health is actively engaged in Nevada at a variety of levels and projects, including Quality Improvement through the CMS QIN QIO program, supporting implementation of an evidence based Community Health Worker led model through the Southern Nevada Pathways Community Hub, and engaging with the ECHO telehealth initiative.

Comagine Health is concerned about the healthcare workforce crisis across the country. Based on conversations with our Nevada partners and other observations, there are several policies we would recommend the commission consider when deciding on policy interventions.

**Short Term – Approve the Nursing Compact/Reciprocity and expand funding for grant repayment program.**

There are two major policies that the commission should consider in the short term.

First, the commission should evaluate legislation that approves the Nursing Compact, also known as Reciprocity. This policy was considered during the 2023 legislative session (Assembly Bill 108) but failed to advance. The compact allows for a nurse licensed in one of the compact states to begin providing care in any of the other compact states without going through the full licensure process, although some conditions such as a criminal background check must be met.

According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 41 states have implemented some portion of the compact.<sup>3</sup> AB 108 was supported by a variety of stakeholders, including the Nevada Nursing

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<sup>1</sup> Gentry, Dana. “Shortage of Healthcare Providers on Lombardo’s Radar .” Nevada Current, April 12, 2024. <https://nevadacurrent.com/briefs/shortage-of-healthcare-providers-on-lombardos-radar/>.

<sup>2</sup> Packham, John, Tabor Griswold, Nicole Mwalili, Amanda Brown, and Laima Etchegoyhen. Rep. *Health Workforce in Nevada: A Chartbook*. Office of Statewide Initiatives, 2023. Page 1.

<sup>3</sup> Nurse Licensure Compact map. Updated July 19, 2023. At that time, 41 states had joined the NLC. [https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/NLC\\_Map.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/public-files/NLC_Map.pdf). Accessed May 7, 2024.

Board.<sup>4</sup> By implementing this straightforward policy change would directly impact the significant nursing shortage in Nevada through expanding the population of potential providers.

Second, we recommend the commission evaluate legislation that expands funding for grant repayment programs such as the Pennington Rural Health Services Loan Repayment Program<sup>5</sup> or the Nevada Health Service Corps.<sup>6</sup> These grant repayment programs promise a forgiveness of student loans if the student agrees to serve a community that has a shortage of practitioners. Some of these programs date back to 1989 and have provided significant assistance to rural communities. Investing additional funding in these programs will benefit communities without enough medical providers.

### **Medium Term – Community Health Workers**

Another policy investment that the commission should consider is Community Health Workers (CHWs), workers who work within or outside of the standard medical system to address chronic disease and social determinants of health, among other conditions.

One of Comagine Health's collaborations in Nevada is the Southern Nevada Pathways Community HUB (SNPCH).<sup>7</sup> Comagine Health is implementing the SNPCH as a proof of concept in the state of a model that is scalable to other communities. This program uses an evidence-based model to organize and manage a no wrong door care coordination network. The network is comprised of Care Coordination Agencies (CCAs) who are contracted with the Hub and employ CHWs who support clients through screening and addressing mitigatable SDOH risk factors. SNPCH uses the Pathways Community HUB Institute Model, a nationally recognized model of community care coordination.<sup>8</sup> Through the SNPCH, CHWs are able to address risk factors and engage vulnerable community members; by reaching out to these community members, CHWs can help bridge the gap between the standard medical system and communities who face barriers to accessing care.

The commission should consider policies that 1) further uplift the role of CHWs and other community based workforce who are well positioned to engage hard to reach patients, and 2) increase use of robust methodologies for strengthening coordination between clinical-community systems of care that support capacity of front line service providers and reduce waste and duplication.

### **Long Term – AHEC and Pipeline considerations**

For long term consideration, the commission should consider investing in rebuilding the “pipeline” of health care careers. One national program is Area Health Education Centers (AHEC), which Comagine

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<sup>4</sup> Nevada Nursing Board. Support Assembly Bill 108, February 2023. [https://nevadanursingboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NV\\_NLC\\_1pgr\\_AB108\\_Final-DIGITAL.pdf](https://nevadanursingboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NV_NLC_1pgr_AB108_Final-DIGITAL.pdf).

<sup>5</sup>“Pennington Rural Health Services Loan Repayment Program.” Loan Repayment Program. Accessed May 7, 2024. [https://osit.nv.gov/Loan\\_Repayment/Loan\\_Repayment\\_Program/](https://osit.nv.gov/Loan_Repayment/Loan_Repayment_Program/)

<sup>6</sup>“Nevada Health Service Corps: School of Medicine.” University of Nevada, Reno. Accessed May 7, 2024. <https://med.unr.edu/statewide/programs/nevada-state-office-of-rural-health/nevada-health-service-corps>.

<sup>7</sup> Comagine Health Southern Nevada Pathways Community Hub. Updated March 1, 2024. Accessed May 7, 2024 <https://comagine.org/program/southern-nevada-pathways-community-hub>

<sup>8</sup>“Community Based Care Coordination: Pathways Community Hub Institute.” PCHI. Accessed May 7, 2024. <https://www.pchi-hub.org/>

Health contracts to assist with in Nevada. AHECs work to coordinate regional workforce education and training programs by connecting students of a variety of ages to medical centers where they can learn about possible careers in the medical field. AHECs can connect in both rural or underserved urban settings, targeting both population concern areas.

The most recent data available from the Nevada AHEC programs dates back to 2020-2021. According to the data<sup>9</sup>, there were 8,573 participants, of which 1,429 were part of the “Pipeline programs” that engage students at the K-12 level and 215 were AHEC Scholars, a program for graduate and doctorate level health profession students. The remaining 6,089 are continuing education opportunities for health professionals. There are a wide variety of partners that help with AHEC, from the CDC to the Governor’s Office of Workforce Innovation; Appendix 1 shows the full list.

In addition to Appendix A, Comagine Health would like the commission to consider the “Health Careers Manual, attached as Appendix B.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide public comment to the Patient Protection Commission.

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1 for details.

**8,573**  
Participants

*Enhancing access to quality healthcare, particularly primary and preventive care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals through community/academic educational partnerships.*



**AHEC Scholars** is for graduate and doctorate level health profession students who wish to complement their education by further developing their leadership knowledge and experience in rural or underserved urban settings. The experiential and didactic trainings cover six core topic areas related to the practice of healthcare to supplement students' knowledge of behavioral health, interprofessional education, social determinants of health, cultural competency, practice transformation, and other current or emerging issues.

## 215 AHEC SCHOLARS:

- 14** Behavioral Health Students (Clinical Psychology, Psychiatry, Marriage and Family Counselor and Clinical Social Work)
- 1** Dental Student
- 61** Medical Students
- 35** Nursing Students (APRN, RN, LPN, NP and CNA)
- 21** Physician Assistant Students
- 20** Pre-Med Students
- 61** Public Health Students (CHWs, MPH, Kinesiology and Epidemiology)
- 1** Radiology Technician Student
- 1** Rehabilitation Student

**Rural Outreach Clinics:** AHEC centers continue to sponsor rural outreach clinics provided by UNR Medical Students. These outreach clinics were provided specifically for migrant workers and underserved rural communities.

## 16 TOTAL CLINICS

**134**

Total medical patients seen

**79**

Total dental patients seen

9 Clinics in Yerington  
3 Clinics in Lovelock  
4 Clinics in Silver Springs

**31**  
Scholars

Completed the MED663 (Medical Spanish) Course offered at UNR. This course improves medical students' skills and acquires basic Spanish vocabulary needed to communicate about health and disease.

**Pipeline programs** expose students at the K-12 level to health careers and develop with the intent to pursue post-secondary education and/or a career in healthcare.

## 1,429 health career participants

**81%**

from disadvantaged backgrounds

from rural backgrounds

**73%**

**55%**

underrepresented minorities

**Clinical training** improves the readiness, willingness, and ability of health professions trainees to gain direct patient care and serve in primary care, rural, and underserved community settings.

## Rural Clinical Rotations

Discipline	Number of Professionals/Students
Medical Students	41
Family Medical Residents	44
Physician Assistant Students	42
Public Health Students	1
Internal Medicine Residents	9

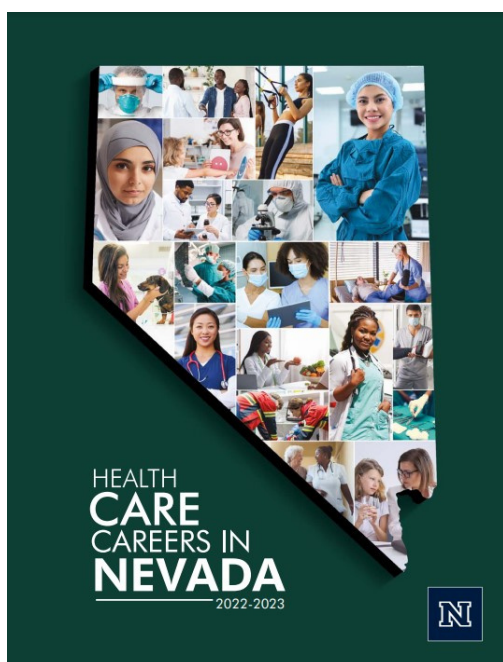
**Continuing education** provides health professionals with access to resources to improve the quality of care for medically underserved communities and health disparities populations.

**6,089**

Continuing education participants

## STATEWIDE LIST OF CURRENT PARTNERS

- American Job Center
- Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- Community of Bilingual English-Spanish Speakers (CBESS)
- Carson Tahoe Health
- Carson Valley Medical Center
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Children's Cabinet
- Clark County School District
- Community Chest
- Community Health Alliance
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Governor's Office of Workforce Innovations (GOWINN)
- Healthy Communities Coalition
- Immunize Nevada
- Las Vegas HEALS (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Leadership of Southern Nevada)
- Las Vegas HEALS (Health, Education, Advocacy, and Leadership of Southern Nevada)
- Nevada Alliance for Youth Apprenticeship
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Nevada Community Health Worker Association
- Nevada Certification Board
- Nevada Department of Education
- Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation
- Nevada Health Centers
- Nevada Hospital Association
- Nevada Minority Health and Equity Coalition
- Nevada Office of Public Health Informatics and Epidemiology (OPHIE)
- Nevada Primary Care Association
- Nevada Rural Health Network
- Nevada Rural Hospital Partners
- Nevada State Office of Rural Health
- Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE)
- Nevada Works
- Office for Service Learning
- Project ECHO Nevada
- Roseman University of Health Sciences
- Southern Nevada Health District
- Touro University Nevada
- University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- University of Nevada, Reno
- University Medical Center of Southern Nevada
- Upward Bound
- Washoe County School District
- Western Governor's University



The 2022-2023 edition of the Health Care Careers in Nevada contains information on nearly 75 health care occupations in Nevada, including an overview of job requirements, Nevada employment outlook, and average salary in Nevada for each occupation

Click here for the downloadable pdf.

