

## Californians Deserve a Robust Health Care Workforce to Meet Their Needs

### The Issue

An acute shortage of health care professionals in California is deepening every year and affects every aspect of care. Statewide, more than 11 million people live in an area without enough primary care providers, and according to a [UC San Francisco study of the state's nursing shortage](#), it will take until 2026 to close the state's current nursing gap. All told, California needs to add 500,000 new allied health care professionals by 2024 in order to provide needed care.

Rural and low-income communities are disproportionately affected by the scarcity — and there's a second disparate impact we must address as the state works to rebuild a depleted workforce: According to the [California Future Health Workforce Commission](#), people of color will be a majority of Californians by 2030 but are severely underrepresented in the health care workforce.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated health care staffing shortages. Many front-line health care workers have reached their breaking point and are choosing to leave the profession altogether (hundreds of thousands of health care jobs have been lost since the pandemic began). Although health care offers Californians solid career paths with upward mobility and economic stability, the pandemic has also delayed education and training for new professionals and slowed the already insufficient pipeline. To make matters worse, staffing agencies have taken advantage of the situation by luring nurses from hospitals during times of acute crisis — which jeopardizes patient care, limits nurses' labor rights, and ultimately results in market dysfunction.

### What's Needed

Each year hospitals invest hundreds of millions of dollars in training California's next generation of health care providers, but closing the massive gaps ahead will require additional long- and short-term solutions:

- Partnerships among all who recognize the need to protect the health of Californians: employers, workers, policymakers, colleges, licensing entities, and others
- Public investments in workforce training through college and university programs to both retain current workers and build a pipeline of future professionals
- Regulatory changes to improve efficiency and transparency in licensing, address limitations on scope of practice, and enhance education and training for nurses and nurse assistants



**78%**

of CA hospitals report an increase in staff turnover from pre-pandemic to mid-2021. Nationally, more health care and social assistance workers **have left their jobs** than at any point in the last 20 years.