

# U.S. Rheumatology Workforce Shortage Puts Patient Care at Risk

## Congress: Take Action to Expand the Rheumatology Workforce

**E**arly and appropriate treatment by a rheumatologist is critical to prevent permanent disability and avoid costly procedures. Unfortunately, the number of rheumatologists entering the profession is not keeping pace with growing demand. The ACR is asking lawmakers to support the following policies to ensure the U.S. rheumatology workforce is ready to meet the country's growing rheumatology care needs.

### House:

- ✓ Introduce legislation to reauthorize the expired Pediatric Specialty Loan Repayment Program (Section 775 of the Public Health Service Act), providing loan repayment for pediatric subspecialists.
- ✓ Co-sponsor the *Strengthening our Pediatric Workforce Act of 2019 (H.R. 1656)*, which would amend the Public Health Service Act to provide support for initiatives to address pediatric public health disparities in children's hospitals graduate medical education programs.

### Senate:

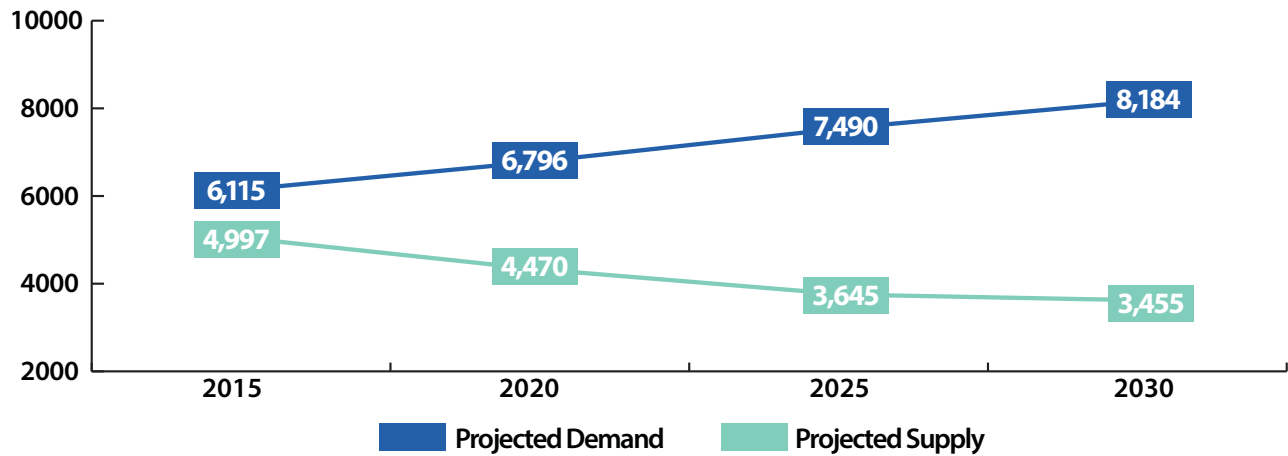
- ✓ Introduce legislation to reauthorize the Pediatric Specialty Loan Repayment Program (Section 775 of the Public Health Service Act), providing loan repayment for pediatric subspecialists.
- ✓ Introduce companion legislation to **H.R. 1656**, the *Strengthening our Pediatric Workforce Act of 2019*.

**A** severe rheumatology workforce shortage threatens the health and well-being of the 91 million Americans diagnosed with arthritis and other rheumatologic diseases. This problem is compounded by maldistribution, where patients in less populated areas are particularly impacted by this shortage. Congress can help these Americans access the care they need by supporting policies that help expand the rheumatology workforce to meet the nation's growing arthritis care needs.

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# Demand for Arthritis Care is Outpacing Supply

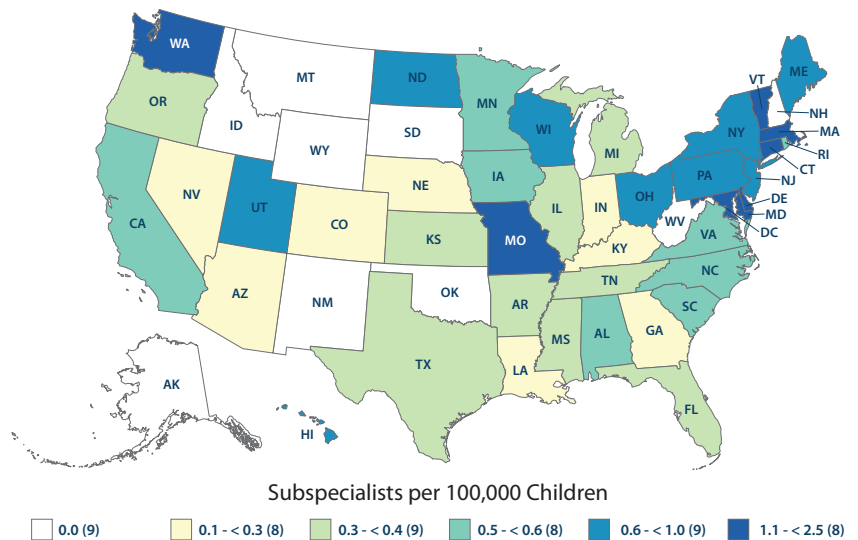
According to the ACR's 2015 Rheumatology Workforce Study, the U.S. will need an additional 4,729 adult rheumatologists by 2030 to meet growing patient demand.



## Kids Get Arthritis, Too— There Are Not Enough Specialists to Treat Them

The ACR's 2015 Rheumatology Workforce Study estimates there are nearly 300,000 American children who have juvenile arthritis, yet there are fewer than 400 board-certified pediatric rheumatologists in the U.S. Five states have only one practicing pediatric rheumatologist, and nine states have none at all. As a result, nearly 75 percent of juvenile arthritis patients are being treated by either pediatricians, who are not trained in the most effective treatments for children with rheumatologic diseases, or by adult rheumatologists, who may not be familiar with the diagnosis and management of pediatric-specific rheumatologic conditions or do not have adequate training on pediatric specific issues such as growth and development.

**Distribution of US-Based Pediatric Rheumatology Diplomates Ever Certified, Age 70 and under, per 100,000 Children by State (as of December 31, 2017)**



**The American College of Rheumatology supports legislation and funding to close the rheumatology workforce gap and ensure the more than 91 million Americans living with rheumatic disease have access to specialized healthcare.**