

## PPC Action Alert

### Urgent Opportunity for Pediatric Subspecialty Advocacy

We have a unique and time-sensitive advocacy opportunity for you to advocate for increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program (PSLRP), which is essential to addressing shortages of pediatric medical subspecialists, pediatric surgical specialists, and child mental health professionals. **We need you to take action as soon as possible.**

Our advocacy efforts have been paying off. Last month, we shared an urgent advocacy opportunity focused on the U.S. House of Representatives - thank you to all who took action! Thanks to your help, **38 representatives joined the letter** to show their support.

As a reminder, **Congress funded PSLRP for the first-time in Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, providing \$5 million for the program in the spending bill signed by President Biden in March.** The federal government is now using this funding to stand up the program. The new program will provide loan repayment for pediatric medical subspecialists, pediatric surgical specialists, and child mental health professionals who care for children in underserved areas, addressing critical shortages of these highly trained professionals by lessening financial disincentives for pursuing pediatric specialty training.

That's where we need your help. This initial investment in PSLRP is a crucial step forward, but more funding is needed in FY 2023 to expand the program's reach. Based on the program's current funding level, HRSA is only expected to be able to fund loan repayment for approximately 50 subspecialists, far short of what is needed to address subspecialty workforce shortages nationwide. You can take action to educate your senators about the importance of this program and advocate that they increase its funding.

Two senators – Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) – are circulating a **bipartisan letter** and asking all their colleagues in the Senate to join them in signing it. This letter will be sent to appropriators, the members of Congress who write the spending bills. The letter supports increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program in FY 2023. Our goal is to get as many U.S. senators to sign this letter as possible to show Senate appropriators the breadth of support for the program.

But the deadline for your senators to sign this letter is May 19– so we need you to take action now! **Please email or call your U.S. senators as soon as possible and ask them to sign the Reed/Cassidy letter of support for increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program in FY 2023.** A template email and phone script specifically for contacting your U.S. senators is available below.

### Contact Your Senators Today

Reach out to your U.S. senators today and urge them to sign the Reed/Cassidy letter of support for increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program in FY 2023. You can reach out to them by phone or email. If you have time, you can call and then follow-up via email to maximize your impact. You can also call your senators' offices again in a week to remind them to join the letter if they haven't already.

**By Phone:** You can call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 to be connected to your senators' offices. You also can find your U.S. senators by going to [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and using the "Find Your Senators" feature at the top left of the page. The contact information for each senator's Washington, DC, office is available on their website.

### **Talking points**

- Hello. My name is **{First and last name}** from **{Town}**. I am an academic pediatrician specializing in **{insert your area of research expertise e.g., pediatric endocrinology, etc.}**, and I am calling today to urge {Senator's name} to sign Senator Reed and Senator Cassidy's letter supporting increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program in Fiscal Year 2023.
- Across the country, there are significant shortages of pediatric subspecialists and child and adolescent psychiatrists. These are physicians with special training for taking care of children with special health care or mental health needs.
- These shortages lead to long travel distances for parents seeking care for their children and long appointment wait times.
- Many pediatric researchers are trained as subspecialists and dedicate their careers to research on complex health needs like Type 1 diabetes and autism spectrum disorder. Shortages of pediatric subspecialists may also slow the development of the next generation of treatments and cures for young people.
- The Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program will help increase access to pediatric subspecialists who provide care in underserved and rural areas.
- I hope {Senator's name} will consider supporting increased funding for the program and sign Senators Reed and Cassidy's letter. The deadline to join is May 19.
- Thank you for all you do for children.

**By Email:** You can email your senators through their websites. You can find your U.S. senators by going to [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov) and using the "Find Your Senators" feature at the top left of the page. Email your senators through the contact form on their website using the template text below.

You can customize this email by adding an additional paragraph with specific information about yourself and your state, such as this:

I am an academic pediatrician specializing in **{insert your area of research expertise e.g., infectious diseases, etc.}**, which means I am **{insert potential practical outcome of research e.g., looking for a cure for Type 1 diabetes}**.

### **Email text:**

*Subject:* Strengthen Child Health and Mental Health in Rural and Underserved Areas

As a constituent I am urging you to sign Senator Reed and Senator Cassidy's letter supporting increased funding for the Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program in Fiscal Year 2023. This program will help provide children with timely access to health services.

Millions of children reside 1.5 hours or more from needed specialty care. Across the country, there are significant shortages of pediatric subspecialists and child and adolescent psychiatrists, which lead to long travel distances and long appointment wait times.

There is also a disparity in the geographic distribution of pediatric subspecialists, resulting in many children in underserved rural and urban areas not receiving timely health care. Children with complex medical conditions are among the most vulnerable; their ability to see the right doctor in a reasonable amount of time should not be determined by where they live.

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The Pediatric Subspecialty Loan Repayment Program will soon be helping to increase access to pediatric subspecialists who provide care in underserved and rural areas. Congress provided crucial first-time funding for this program in Fiscal Year 2022, and an increased investment will help expand the reach of this program. Once implemented, this program will provide up to \$35,000 in loan repayment per year for up to three years in exchange for providing care for an underserved area, helping to address the economic factors that discourage individuals from subspecializing.

As a pediatrician practicing in an academic medical center, my debt burden remains significantly high even after years of practice. I know that there will be significant interest among my colleagues in taking advantage of this important program.

Please consider supporting increased funding for this program and sign the letter being circulated by Senators Reed and Cassidy. Contact Jill Boland in Sen. Reed's office or Mary Moody in Sen. Cassidy's office for more information.

Thank you for all you do.