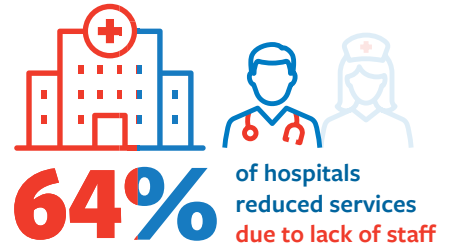


In 2020, the Department of State Health Services found that Texas faced significant physician and nursing shortages. These shortages were projected to drastically increase over the next decade. Over the course of the pandemic, staff burnout, increased workplace violence and broader economic pressures exacerbated these challenges. In 2023, **64% of hospitals were operating with fewer beds and reduced services** due to lack of staff. Nursing shortages are particularly acute, but workforce shortages exist at all levels:



- By 2032, demand for full-time registered nurses will outpace supply, **leaving a deficit of more than 57,000 positions.** This means 16% of the demand will not be met.
- The RN vacancy rate increased from nearly 6% in 2019 to 17.6% in 2022.
- The LVN vacancy rate increased from 5.5% to 23.1% over the same span.
- It takes at least 61 days to fill the majority of open nursing positions.
- The percentage of hospitals reporting zero vacancies for nurses plummeted between 2012 and 2022, while vacancy rates soared over the same time period.
- In 2023, **Texas nursing schools turned away 13,705 qualified applicants.** Nursing schools are unable to accommodate the applicant demand, citing a lack of masters-prepared faculty and clinical space.



**13,705 rejected potential nurses**



**In 2023, the Texas Legislature responded to the dire need for additional nurses by passing Senate Bill 25.** Supported by THA, this legislation:

- Revamped the state's dormant nursing scholarship program;
- Created grant programs supporting the expansion of clinical training sites for nursing students; and
- Expanded the Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Assistance Program to include part-time nursing faculty.



The Legislature also passed SB 240, which requires health care facilities to have workplace violence prevention policies and plans, and SB 840, which enhances **the penalty for an assault of hospital personnel on hospital property to a third-degree felony**. THA also advocated for these pieces of legislation.



### The Legislature further demonstrated their commitment to addressing health care workforce shortages through funding that:



- Maintained funding for the 1.1-to-1 ratio of first-year residents to medical school graduates;
- Increased funding for the Family Practice Residency Program and provided new funding for the Forensic Psychiatry Fellowship and the Rural Residency Physician Grant programs;



- Expanded funding for the Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program;
- Committed \$28 million to the Mental Health Professionals Loan Repayment Program; and
- Increased funding for Texas Workforce Commission apprenticeships and skills training programs, among other investments.

## Recommendations for the Legislature



With continued workforce shortages, it is imperative that **legislative funding keep pace with the continued need for growth** of these programs. The Legislature should:

- **Study the implementation of Senate Bill 25** and its impact on Texas' nursing shortage.
- **Study and identify impediments to educating and training new nurses.** Specifically, identify challenges to securing clinical space for nursing students. Consider the wage differential between clinical nurses and nurse preceptors. Preceptors are experienced licensed nurses and other clinicians who act as teachers and supervise nursing students during their clinical rotations. Their role is to help students translate theoretical learning to real-world clinical practice. These preceptors supplement part-time and full-time faculty members and are essential to training new nurses. Preceptors are needed for all levels of nursing education. The Legislature should consider state incentives to encourage more nurses to serve as preceptors to train the next generation of nurses.



- **Examine the totality of workforce shortages** in the health care field, such as shortages of medical assistants, surgical technicians, radiology technicians and pharmacy technicians. Identify opportunities to alleviate the workforce shortage to meet the needs of Texas' rapidly growing population.



- **Monitor the effectiveness and distribution of millions in new workforce funds** to ensure they increase the number of nurses in the workforce pipeline. Programs include the Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Program, the Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program and new funds for nursing scholarships. In the 88th Regular Session, the Legislature funded the Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program at \$46.8 million, an increase of \$27.9 million from 2021-22. The Nursing Faculty Loan Repayment Assistance Program was funded at \$7 million, an increase of \$4.1 million over the prior biennium. Lawmakers allocated \$25 million over the two years for nursing scholarships. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board administers these programs.



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