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NEWS

APTA Supports Bill to Provide PTs Relief From Student Loan Debt

A legislation introduced in Congress may provide relief from student loan debt to physical therapists who practice in areas where there are shortages of health care providers.

Representatives Marion Berry (D-Ark 1st District) and Jo Ann Emerson (R-Mo 8th District) led a group of representatives in sponsoring the *Physical Therapist Student Loan Repayment Eligibility Act* (HR 1134), to make physical therapists eligible for student loan repayment assistance under the National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program.

"Becoming a physical therapist involves devoting a significant amount of time in education and clinical experience, including completing graduate and in many cases doctoral degree programs," says R Scott Ward, PT, PhD, president of [American Physical Therapy Association](#) (APTA). "Due to the extensive education and clinical training requirements, many students begin their careers with a significant amount of debt load. This new bill would help alleviate some of that burden and encourage more physical therapists to practice in underserved communities that need them the most."

The National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program currently includes primary care physicians, dentists, nurse midwives, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and mental behavioral health professionals practicing in Health Shortage Areas. The bill would add physical therapists to this list of providers eligible for the program.

According to the APTA, a companion bill is expected to be introduced in the Senate later this month.

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