
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1591 (Michelle Rodriguez) - California Podiatric Pipeline Program

Version: July 2, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: HEALTH 10 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Agnes Lee

Bill Summary: AB 1591 would establish the California Podiatric Pipeline Program.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Department of Health Care Access and Information (HCAI) estimates annual General Fund costs of \$899,000 for state administration.
- Unknown General Fund cost pressures to provide funding for grants. The HCAI indicates that the two special funds referenced in the bill cannot support the California Podiatric Pipeline Program because those resources are already allocated for other purposes, and no discretionary funds are available.

Background: According to the Podiatric Medical Board of California (PMBC), which licenses and regulates Doctors of Podiatric Medicine (DPMs), podiatric medicine means “the diagnosis, medical, surgical, mechanical, manipulative, and electrical treatment of the human foot, including the ankle and tendons that insert into the foot and the nonsurgical treatment of the muscles and tendons of the leg governing the functions of the foot.” One of the many important treatments provided by DPMs is wound care in the lower limb, which is commonly a result of the diabetes epidemic.

The HCAI administers various programs that provide scholarships, loan repayments, and grants to students, graduates, and institutions providing direct patient care in areas of unmet need. These programs support health care professionals including physicians, nurses, behavioral health professionals, and allied health professionals. Current law establishes the Health Professions Education Fund to provide scholarships and loans to students from underrepresented groups who are accepted to or enrolled in schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing, or other health professions.

The HCAI is also responsible for various healthcare workforce initiatives. This includes the Health Professions Pathways Program (HPPP) which is designed to recruit and support students from underrepresented regions and backgrounds to pursue careers in health professions. HPPP is a competitive grant opportunity for organizations that develop and implement health professions pathways programs. Eligible programs may include pipeline initiatives, summer internship models, hands-on learning experiences, post-undergraduate fellowships, and post-baccalaureate preparation programs designed to advance students into health professional training.

Proposed Law: Specific provisions of the bill would:

- Require the HCAI to establish and administer the California Podiatric Pipeline Program to promote careers in podiatric medicine and support the educational advancement of California residents pursuing the doctor of podiatric medicine degree.
- Require the HCAI to take actions that include, but are not limited to, all of the following:
 - Developing partnerships and agreements that link undergraduate institutions with California podiatric medical schools.
 - Providing mentorship, outreach, and clinical-shadowing opportunities for undergraduate students interested in podiatric medicine.
 - Creating a structured pathway for eligible students to receive early admission consideration to participating podiatric medical schools, contingent on meeting academic and professional benchmarks.
 - Prioritizing recruitment of students from underrepresented, rural, or medically underserved areas of the state.
- Authorize the HCAI to award planning or coordination grants to participating universities or colleges to support implementation of this program as funding is made available; and provide that the HCAI may use funds from the Health Professions Education Fund or Health Professions Pathways Program.
- Require the HCAI, subject to an appropriation by the Legislature, to annually report to the Legislature on the number of students participating, the number matriculating into doctor of podiatric medicine programs, and recommendations for expanding residency opportunities for podiatric graduates.
- Make implementation contingent upon appropriation by the Legislature.
- Sunset the provisions on January 1, 2032.

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