

Contact: Laura Young, director, Marketing & Public Relations; [laura.young@sghs.org](mailto:laura.young@sghs.org), 912-466-2148

## **Georgia House of Representatives Recommends Funding for Southeast Georgia Health System Physician Residency Program Planning**

BRUNSWICK, Georgia: March 5, 2021 – The Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations Act approved today by the Georgia House of Representatives includes \$180,000 to support Southeast Georgia Health System with the initial planning work to establish a Graduate Medical Education (GME) program for resident physicians.

“Rural hospitals in Georgia are experiencing major doctor shortages, especially primary care physicians,” stated Michael D. Scherneck, president and chief executive officer for Southeast Georgia Health System. “Our Health System has been actively recruiting physicians for more than fifteen years and we believe a residency program is a natural next step to begin to ‘grow our own’ physicians for the community, furthering our ongoing recruitment efforts.”

According to the Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce, more than 22% of Georgia’s family medicine and internal medicine physicians are nearing retirement age. Of more concern, rural communities often face significantly higher shortages of physicians than urban areas.

The legislative delegation representing Glynn and Camden counties spearheaded advocacy for the funding which was added in the House budget. “We know family medicine and internal medicine physicians are in short supply in our community,” noted Representative Don Hogan (R-St. Simons Island), dean of the delegation. “This funding is a first step to help alleviate that issue.”

“Having a pipeline of primary care physicians in our community is so important,” said Representative Buddy DeLoach (R-Townsend). “I am honored to support funding for the Health System to complete a feasibility study and analysis of adding a primary care residency program to our community.”

All medical school graduates must complete a period of residency training to be licensed to practice medicine. During residency, doctors learn skills and techniques specific to their chosen specialty under the supervision of attending physicians and serve as part of a care team. Medical workforce research finds that physicians frequently select a future practice location within the state or community in which they complete their residency.

“We anticipate that any residency program offered would be three years in length and focused on primary care, which includes both family medicine and internal medicine,” Scherneck said.

The Health System’s affiliated physician practice group, Southeast Georgia Physician Associates, is comprised of more than 140 physicians that serve Brantley, Camden, Charlton, Glynn and McIntosh counties. “Our physicians are dedicated and excited about teaching the next generation of physicians,” added Scherneck. “Our talented group of physicians and staff position us well to take on graduate medical education. We already host undergraduate medical education rotations, and we know the academic enterprise improves the quality and reach of our services and our skills.”

“A medical residency program would not only provide additional primary care physicians in our community, it would also promote economic development through an increase of high-paying jobs. I’m proud of the work the Health System has done to make this a reality,” said Representative Steven Sainz (R-Woodbine).

“I cannot thank our local delegation and the Georgia House of Representatives enough for supporting this funding,” Scherneck said. “We look forward to working with the Senate and the Governor’s office to have the funding finalized.”

Senator Sheila McNeill (R-Brunswick) expressed optimism about the funding: “I look forward to supporting the Health System’s funding request in the Senate and the opportunity to have a graduate medical education program for physicians in our community.”

**ABOUT SOUTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM**

Southeast Georgia Health System is a not-for-profit health system comprised of two acute care hospitals, two long term care facilities, two comprehensive Cancer Care Centers and multiple specialty care centers, including orthopaedic and spine care, joint replacement, breast care, maternity, outpatient rehabilitation, sleep management and wound care. The Brunswick Campus Cancer Care Center is accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer and offers the only CyberKnife® M6 with MLC technology in Georgia. Additionally, the Southeast Georgia Physician Associates medical group includes more than 140 providers working in 20 different medical specialties at more than 50 locations. In 2020, the Brunswick Campus was rated High Performing in COPD and Heart Failure by the U.S. News & World Report. For more information, visit [sghs.org](http://sghs.org).

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