

## Castle Announces Support of New Legislation to Enable Physical Therapists to Participate in National Program to Help Underserved Communities -- July 6, 2006

Castle visits University of Delaware Physical Therapy Program to make announcement, tour labs, meet with researchers

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle today visited the University of Delaware Department of Physical Therapy, toured their three clinics, met with researchers and announced his support for H.R. 5134, legislation that would authorize physical therapists to participate in the National Health Service Corps to help underserved communities.

"People living in underserved rural and urban communities often have pressing health needs that must be treated by a health care team. Take for example a patient with diabetes -- they not only need access to their general practitioner and an endocrinologist, but also a physical therapist because of different foot complications they may suffer. However, working in such a setting often presents a financial hardship for newly trained physical therapists facing thousands of dollars in school loans," Castle said. "By enabling physical therapists to participate in the National Health Service Corps, they will be able to join doctors, nurses, mental health specialists and dentists, patients health care needs will be better served."

H.R. 5134 is legislation that would authorize physical therapists to participate in the National Health Service Corps' Loan Repayment Program to help encourage physical therapists to serve in rural and urban underserved communities. According to the American Physical Therapy Association, the maximum loan repayment through the program during the required initial 2-year contract period is \$25,000 each year.

Each participant would receive a regular salary from the entity where they work, plus the loan repayment through the federal government. This bill does not authorize any new funding for the program, but rather adds physical therapists to the list of healthcare providers that can compete for the funds. The Fiscal Year 2007 Labor HHS Education Appropriations Bill, which funds the National Health Service Corps, funds the program at \$89,310,000 for recruitment activities, which is \$4,080,000 above the fiscal year 2006 funding level and the budget request.

Castle toured the three clinics at the University of Delaware Physical Therapy Department and met with researchers using primarily federal dollars through the National Institutes of Health to conduct key research in key areas of medicine including osteoarthritis, motion analysis, limb dynamics, mobility in young infants, and other important biomechanics studies.

To learn more about the National Health Service Corps, please visit: <http://nhsc.bhpr.hrsa.gov/>