

UM School of Medicine initiative aims to address physician shortage on Eastern Shore



[Daily Record Staff](#) // October 14, 2024 // 2 Minute Read

With a commitment to addressing rural health disparities and the challenges faced by Maryland's rural Eastern Shore residents, the University of Maryland School of Medicine has launched the Rural Health Equity and Access Longitudinal Elective (R-HEALE).

The program is designed to train and place incoming medical students in Eastern Shore health care practices. It has received \$1.4 million in state funding to launch the effort with added funds provided by University of Maryland, Baltimore; University of Maryland, Eastern Shore (UMES); the Rural Maryland Council and philanthropic donors.



The program, in partnership with UMES, has accepted six current first-year medical students with an interest in rural health. Three students have been awarded full-tuition scholarships with a commitment to working on the Eastern Shore for four years after completing residency training.

The students will have didactic and mentoring sessions in Baltimore, followed by research and clinical experiences on the Eastern Shore. The long-term goal is to ultimately support 10 new students interested in rural health in this elective program each year, with 10 full in-state tuition scholarships.

Nearly the entire Eastern Shore is designated by the federal government as a medically underserved area (MUA) and as a "health professional shortage area," which means residents often lack access to the medical care they need to address pressing health concerns. The five counties in Maryland with the fewest primary care physicians per capita are all in the Eastern Shore region, with Caroline County having only one health provider per 2,500 state residents compared to Baltimore County, which has one provider per 1,000 state residents.