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California Health Line

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State Expected To Face Serious Shortage of Eldercare Providers

On Tuesday, California lawmakers reported that the state is facing a serious shortage of health workers to care for its elderly population, "[California Watch Blog](#)" reports.

Mariko Yamada (D-Davis), chair of the Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care, called a three-hour hearing on the issue with Sandre Swanson (D-Alameda), chair of the Assembly Committee on Labor and Employment.

More than 4.4 million Californians are age 65 or older. By 2050, that population is expected to grow to 11.5 million, or one in five Californians, according to the state Department of Finance.

However, only 534 certified geriatricians practice in the state, [according to data](#) from the American Board of Internal Medicine. The figures suggest that there are 8,262 California seniors for every geriatrician.

The state also has 508,900 direct care workers, including home health aides and certified nurse assistants, [according to a report](#) from the SCAN Foundation.

California also has millions of unpaid caregivers, such as family members. The average age of caregivers is 51, suggesting that the state could face challenges as its caregiver population ages.

Calling for More Health Workers

During the hearing, educators, eldercare advocates and health care providers discussed the need to recruit, train and retain more geriatricians and other health workers.

Speakers suggested that the state could encourage more young people to pursue health care jobs by offering public education opportunities and loan repayment programs.

Heather Young -- dean and associate vice chancellor for nursing at the UC-Davis Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing -- emphasized the importance of encouraging medical specialists to learn more about eldercare issues. She said, "It's about gerontologizing, taking what they know and equipping them to serve the people they're serving better" (Lin, "[California Watch Blog](#)," 11/10).

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