



U.S. Sen. Gary Peters vows to push for more Southwest Michigan residency spots after WMU medical school tour

Emily Monacelli | emonacel@mlive.com By Emily Monacelli | emonacel@mlive.com

Follow on Twitter

on February 16, 2015 at 4:56 PM, updated February 18, 2015 at 7:19 AM

KALAMAZOO, MI -- U.S. Sen. Gary Peters kicked off his first full week in Michigan since being sworn in by touring the **Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine** in Kalamazoo.

Peters toured the the facility's simulation center, which trains students for clinical and emergency situations, along with other areas of the school in downtown Kalamazoo. Peters talked with Dr. Hal Jenson, dean of the medical school, about the need for medical jobs in Southwest Michigan during the stop, which is one of several Michigan stops on his Economic Listening Tour.

Peters said he was not surprised the school has about 4,000 applications for the 60 available spots in next year's class.

"People definitely want to be in this medical school," Peters said. "It's in high demand. It's an opportunity to get some of the best and brightest young students who want to pursue a career in medicine right here in West Michigan, in Kalamazoo."

Peters said he hopes the students who go to the medical school stay in Michigan. Jenson told Peters half of the medical school's students in the inaugural class came from Michigan and nine of them are from Southwest Michigan.

Having those kinds of connections is important for a pipeline, Jenson said.

"We can train physicians from this area that'll be more likely to stay in this area when they graduate," Jenson said.

About one-third of physicians in the Kalamazoo region **trained at (the Kalamazoo Center for Medical Studies)**, and now the medical school, Jenson said.

"If that hadn't been here, take a third of the physicians out of the region, what kind of trouble we would be in," Jenson said.

"Having that pipeline is important."

Peters said he would work to create more residency spots for students in West Michigan in the hopes that students who train here will stay here.

"We have these schools that are getting created and wonderful training that's happening, but the next phase of education has to be the residency spots in hospitals," Peters said.

"We have baby boomers who are now going into retirement, and as that population gets older the need for medical services goes up. We have to be training more physicians to be prepared to handle that, so it's important that we increase that funding for the next generation of physicians."

Peters, a Democrat, defeated former Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land, a Republican, in the Nov. 2014 election.

*Emily Monacelli covers higher education and craft beer for the Kalamazoo Gazette. Contact her at emonacel@mlive.com or follow her on **Twitter**.*

© 2015 MLive.com. All rights reserved.