

**TITLE 15 - COMMERCE AND TRADE**

**CHAPTER 1 - MONOPOLIES AND COMBINATIONS IN RESTRAINT OF TRADE**

**§ 37b. Confirmation of antitrust status of graduate medical resident matching programs**

**(a) Findings and purposes**

**(1) Findings**

Congress makes the following findings:

**(A)** For over 50 years, most United States medical school seniors and the large majority of graduate medical education programs (popularly known as “residency programs”) have chosen to use a matching program to match medical students with residency programs to which they have applied. These matching programs have been an integral part of an educational system that has produced the finest physicians and medical researchers in the world.

**(B)** Before such matching programs were instituted, medical students often felt pressure, at an unreasonably early stage of their medical education, to seek admission to, and accept offers from, residency programs. As a result, medical students often made binding commitments before they were in a position to make an informed decision about a medical specialty or a residency program and before residency programs could make an informed assessment of students’ qualifications. This situation was inefficient, chaotic, and unfair and it often led to placements that did not serve the interests of either medical students or residency programs.

**(C)** The original matching program, now operated by the independent non-profit National Resident Matching Program and popularly known as “the Match”, was developed and implemented more than 50 years ago in response to widespread student complaints about the prior process. This Program includes on its board of directors individuals nominated by medical student organizations as well as by major medical education and hospital associations.

**(D)** The Match uses a computerized mathematical algorithm, as students had recommended, to analyze the preferences of students and residency programs and match students with their highest preferences from among the available positions in residency programs that listed them. Students thus obtain a residency position in the most highly ranked program on their list that has ranked them sufficiently high among its preferences. Each year, about 85 percent of participating United States medical students secure a place in one of their top 3 residency program choices.

**(E)** Antitrust lawsuits challenging the matching process, regardless of their merit or lack thereof, have the potential to undermine this highly efficient, pro-competitive, and long-standing process. The costs of defending such litigation would divert the scarce resources of our country’s teaching hospitals and medical schools from their crucial missions of patient care, physician training, and medical research. In addition, such costs may lead to abandonment of the matching process, which has effectively served the interests of medical students, teaching hospitals, and patients for over half a century.

**(2) Purposes**

It is the purpose of this section to—

**(A)** confirm that the antitrust laws do not prohibit sponsoring, conducting, or participating in a graduate medical education residency matching program, or agreeing to do so; and

**(B)** ensure that those who sponsor, conduct or participate in such matching programs are not subjected to the burden and expense of defending against litigation that challenges such matching programs under the antitrust laws.

**(b) Application of antitrust laws to graduate medical education residency matching programs**

**(1) Definitions**

In this subsection:

**(A) Antitrust laws**

The term “antitrust laws”—

- (i) has the meaning given such term in subsection (a) of section 12 of this title, except that such term includes section 45 of this title to the extent such section 45 applies to unfair methods of competition; and
- (ii) includes any State law similar to the laws referred to in clause (i).

**(B) Graduate medical education program**

The term “graduate medical education program” means—

- (i) a residency program for the medical education and training of individuals following graduation from medical school;
- (ii) a program, known as a specialty or subspecialty fellowship program, that provides more advanced training; and
- (iii) an institution or organization that operates, sponsors or participates in such a program.

**(C) Graduate medical education residency matching program**

The term “graduate medical education residency matching program” means a program (such as those conducted by the National Resident Matching Program) that, in connection with the admission of students to graduate medical education programs, uses an algorithm and matching rules to match students in accordance with the preferences of students and the preferences of graduate medical education programs.

**(D) Student**

The term “student” means any individual who seeks to be admitted to a graduate medical education program.

**(2) Confirmation of antitrust status**

It shall not be unlawful under the antitrust laws to sponsor, conduct, or participate in a graduate medical education residency matching program, or to agree to sponsor, conduct, or participate in such a program. Evidence of any of the conduct described in the preceding sentence shall not be admissible in Federal court to support any claim or action alleging a violation of the antitrust laws.

**(3) Applicability**

Nothing in this section shall be construed to exempt from the antitrust laws any agreement on the part of 2 or more graduate medical education programs to fix the amount of the stipend or other benefits received by students participating in such programs.

**(c) Effective date**

This section shall take effect on April 10, 2004, shall apply to conduct whether it occurs prior to, on, or after April 10, 2004, and shall apply to all judicial and administrative actions or other proceedings pending on April 10, 2004.

(Pub. L. 108–218, title II, § 207, Apr. 10, 2004, 118 Stat. 611.)