

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
U.S. Senate  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Todd Young  
U.S. Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Wild  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1027 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David McKinley  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2239 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Kaine and Young and Representatives Wild and McKinley:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we would like to thank you for introducing the “Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act” (S. 610/H.R. 1667). This bipartisan, bicameral legislation will help reduce and prevent mental and behavioral health conditions, suicide, and burnout, as well as increase access to evidence-based treatment for physicians, medical students, and other health care professionals, especially those who continue to be overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stigma surrounding mental illness is a well-known barrier to seeking care among the general population, but it can have an even stronger impact among health care professionals. For most physicians and other clinicians, seeking treatment for mental health sparks legitimate fear of resultant loss of licensure, loss of income, or other meaningful career setbacks as a result of ongoing stigma. Such fears have deterred them from accessing necessary mental health care, leaving many to suffer in silence, or worse. In fact, physicians have a significantly higher risk of dying by suicide than the general public.

Ensuring clinicians can freely seek mental health treatment and services without fear of professional setback means their mental health care needs can be resolved, rather than hidden away and suffered through. Furthermore, optimal clinician mental health is essential to ensuring that patients have a strong and capable health care workforce to provide the care they need and deserve.

To ensure patient access to medically necessary care can be maintained, it is vital that we work to preserve and protect the health of our medical workforce. Your legislation will help establish grants for training health profession students, residents, or health care professionals to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, substance use disorders, and other mental health conditions; identify and disseminate best practices for reducing and preventing suicide and burnout among health care professionals; establish a national education and awareness campaign to encourage health care workers to seek support and treatment; establish grants for employee education, peer-support programming, and mental and behavioral health treatment; and commission a federal study into health care professional mental health and burnout, as well as barriers to seeking appropriate care.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue and for introducing this legislation. We look forward to working with you to ensure the “Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act” is signed into law.

Sincerely,

American College of Emergency Physicians  
American Academy of Dermatology Association  
American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association of Clinical Urologists  
American Association of Neurological Surgeons  
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons  
American College of Cardiology  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Radiology  
American College of Rheumatology  
American College of Surgeons  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Gastroenterological Association  
American Medical Association  
American Medical Group Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Osteopathic Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Society of Anesthesiologists  
Association for Clinical Oncology  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Congress of Neurological Surgeons  
Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation  
Emergency Nurses Association  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association of Spine Specialists  
Physicians Advocacy Institute  
Renal Physicians Association  
Society for Vascular Surgery  
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons