

January 18, 2024

The Honorable Brad Schneider
300 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Valadao
2465 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Annie Kuster
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Carey
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Kelly
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Schneider, Kuster, Valadao, Carey, and Kelly:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), thank you for introducing the Substance Use Disorder Workforce Act. This thoughtful, bipartisan legislation would help address significant workforce shortages that contribute to a lack of access to substance use disorder care for patients across the country. We greatly appreciate your commitment to advancing policies that would strengthen the health care workforce serving on the front lines of the nation's opioid epidemic.

The AAMC is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 158 U.S. medical schools accredited by the [Liaison Committee on Medical Education](#); 13 accredited Canadian medical schools; approximately 400 academic health systems and teaching hospitals, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools, academic health systems and teaching hospitals, and the millions of individuals across academic medicine, including more than 193,000 full-time faculty members, 96,000 medical students, 153,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Following a 2022 merger, the Alliance of Academic Health Centers and the Alliance of Academic Health Centers International broadened participation in the AAMC by U.S. and international academic health centers.

As you know, the AAMC estimates that the United States faces a shortage of up to 124,000 physicians in both primary care and specialty disciplines by 2034. The AAMC appreciates that Congress has invested in additional residency positions twice since 2021, providing 1,000 positions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and then 200 in the Consolidated

Appropriations Act, 2023 – 100 of which were specifically targeted to psychiatry and psychiatric subspecialties. While this investment is crucial, more is needed to increase sorely needed access to these providers across the country. In 2022, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reported that only 24% of patients aged 12 or older who needed treatment for a substance use disorder received that treatment.¹ Additionally, more than 109,000 drug overdose deaths occurred in the U.S. in the 12 months ending in February 2023, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.²

The Substance Use Disorder Workforce Act would provide Medicare support for an additional 1,000 graduate medical education positions over the next five years in teaching hospitals that have, or are in the process of establishing, accredited residency programs in addiction medicine, addiction psychiatry, or pain medicine. Although the nation's medical schools and teaching health systems and hospitals are actively advancing a comprehensive response to the opioid crisis, including preparing the next generation of health care professionals to address the epidemic, the addition of these targeted positions would further strengthen the ability of these institutions to train more physicians who are specialized to treat patients with substance use disorders and chronic pain. The AAMC views this legislation as critical to helping alleviate the physician shortage and connecting patients with the care that they need.

The AAMC greatly values your continued support and applauds your efforts. We look forward to working with you to secure the passage of this legislation. If you have any further questions, please contact my colleague Ally Perleoni, Director of Government Relations (aperleoni@aamc.org).

Sincerely,



Danielle Turnipseed, JD, MHSA, MPP
Chief Public Policy Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges

CC: David J. Skorton, MD
President and CEO
Association of American Medical Colleges

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/reports/rpt42731/2022-nsduh-main-highlights.pdf>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>