



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
655 K Street, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20001-2399
T 202 828 0400
aamc.org

August 13, 2020

The Honorable Tim Kaine
231 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
520 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
728 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kaine, Cassidy, Reed and Young:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write to thank you for your bill, the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act*, authorizing a number of initiatives to address suicide, mental health, and burnout of health professionals. The AAMC is pleased to support this legislation.

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health care through medical education, patient care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 155 accredited U.S. and 17 accredited Canadian medical schools; more than 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their more than 179,000 full-time faculty members, 92,000 medical students, 140,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

Physicians and other health professionals dedicate their careers to keeping people healthy, but too often they do not receive the care they need to address their own well-being. AAMC data shows that, like the overall U.S. physician population, a large percentage of medical school faculty have experienced higher levels of stress, and nearly a third of medical faculty face one or more symptoms of burnout.¹ In addition to their detrimental effect on health professionals and their families, burnout, stress, and other behavioral health issues negatively affect patient care, patient experience, and overall health outcomes.

There are numerous systemic and other sources for the high levels of stress and burnout that have long plagued health professionals, and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is only exacerbating the problem. Yet, stigma, bias, and other barriers can hinder health

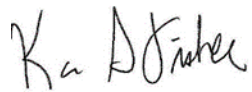
¹ <https://www.aamc.org/system/files/reports/1/february2019burnoutamongusmedicalschoolfaculty.pdf>

professionals from seeking and receiving care for new or ongoing mental and behavioral health challenges.

We appreciate that your bill would take steps to reverse these troubling trends through investments to prevent suicide, reduce burnout, and promote care for mental and behavioral health conditions among health care professionals. While the ability of any single educational intervention on its own to overcome pervasive systemic challenges is limited, we believe that the bill's grants to help train health professionals in strategies to reduce stress and burnout would represent an important effort to raise awareness among health care professionals about the need to prioritize their well-being, particularly if teaching hospitals also are eligible for such awards. We also appreciate the inclusion of grants to promote use of mental and behavioral health care services among health professionals and the bill's two studies to identify the factors contributing to such challenges and evidence-based best practices for reducing and preventing self-harm and burnout.

Thank you again for your ongoing efforts to promote physician well-being and toward our mutual goal of improved health for all. We look forward to continuing to work with you as the legislation moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karen Fisher, JD
AAMC Chief Public Policy Officer