

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
136 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

Last year, Democrats and Republicans joined together to pass the *SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act* (Public Law No: 115-271), and, thanks to your leadership, appropriated more than \$4 billion to address the opioid overdose crisis in the Fiscal Year 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. These are historic achievements. But there is much more to do in our nation's battle against substance use disorder (SUD) – including regarding the severe shortage of physicians, nurses, behavioral health professionals, and other health care workers who have the necessary training to treat people with addiction.

An estimated 20.7 million Americans needed treatment for SUD in 2017, but only about 4 million of them received any form of such treatment. This treatment gap is due in part to the shortage of workers in the SUD field – a shortfall that could reach an estimated 250,000 workers by 2025.

The need for more certified addiction specialist physicians is especially acute. There are only about 4,400 such physicians who are actively practicing in the United States – far below the 6,000 that were needed based on an estimate in 2009, long before the peak of the opioid overdose epidemic. In fact, as of February 2019, only 66 of our nation's 187 accredited medical schools offer addiction medicine fellowships, and only 40 of those have met the certification criteria set by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to support funding within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for two new programs that would address the SUD workforce shortage: the Mental and Substance

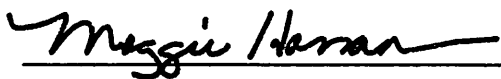
Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration Program, authorized in the 21st Century Cures Act, and the Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Workforce authorized in the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act.

We urge you to provide \$10 million for the training demonstration program, which will award grants to institutions such as medical schools and federally qualified health centers to support training for medical residents and fellows in psychiatry and addiction medicine, as well as nurse practitioners, physician assistants and others who are willing to provide SUD treatment in underserved communities. We also ask that \$25 million be appropriated for the newly authorized loan repayment program, which will allow workers who pursue full-time SUD treatment jobs in high-need geographic areas to repay up to \$250,000 of their student loans.

Funding these programs would allow more individuals to pursue and afford SUD treatment education and training, and would significantly increase the number of qualified experts available to help the more than 20 million Americans in need of care.

We recognize the difficult task you face in balancing the many needs of our nation in the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, and we appreciate your consideration of this request. We are grateful for your leadership in ensuring necessary funds for these critical needs.

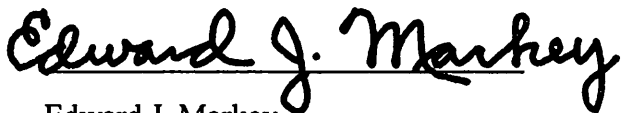
Sincerely,



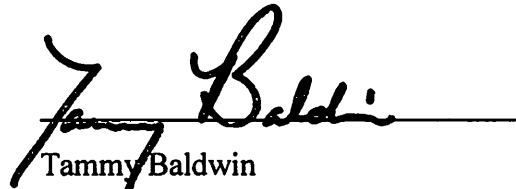
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator




Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



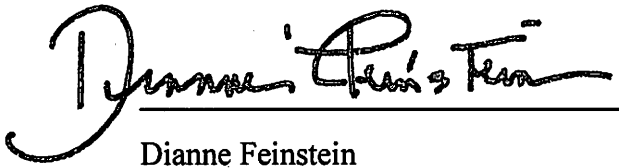
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



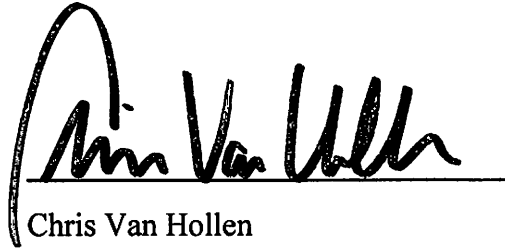
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



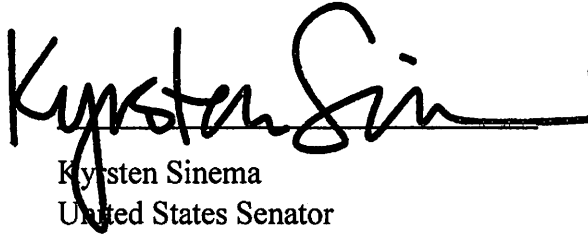
Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



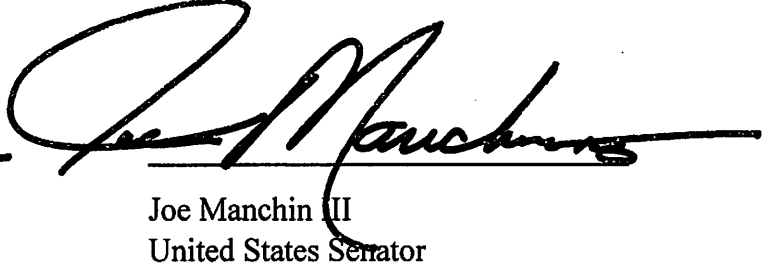
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



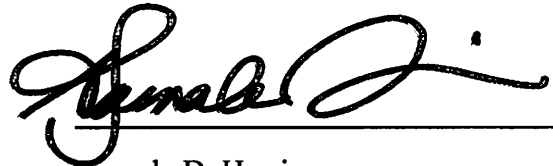
Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



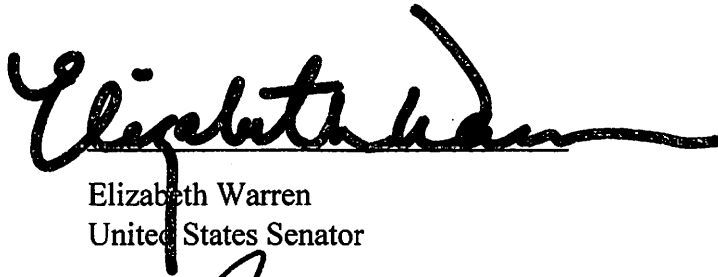
Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



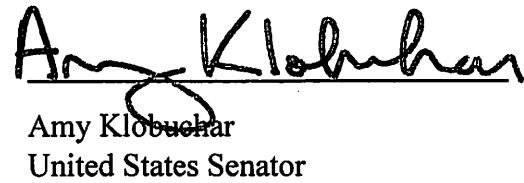
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



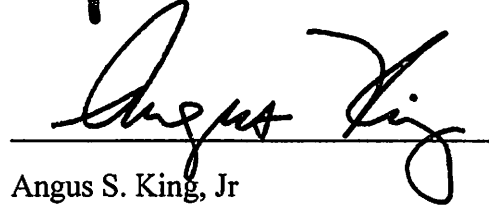
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr
United States Senator