



**ASAM** American Society of  
Addiction Medicine

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## **ASAM Commends Bipartisan Senate Leaders for Supporting Investments in the Addiction Treatment Workforce In FY 2020 Appropriations Bill**

*New Workforce Programs Will Help Address Deadly Opioid Overdose Epidemic*

**Rockville, MD** – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) today commended a bipartisan group of US Senators calling for strategic investments to increase the ranks of qualified, well-trained addiction treatment professionals in high-need communities across the United States. Fifteen Senators from both sides of the aisle signed on to a letter urging the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to prioritize funding in fiscal year 2020 for two addiction treatment workforce programs authorized in previous legislation.

“We applaud this bipartisan group of Senators for recognizing the need to invest in and expand our nation’s addiction treatment workforce so Americans all across the country can better access the high-quality, evidence-based care they need to continue down the path of recovery,” said Paul H. Earley, MD, DFASAM, president of ASAM. “By fully funding these two programs, which were previously authorized by Congress, lawmakers have the historic opportunity to help our country take a major step forward in addressing the deadly opioid overdose epidemic that is taking tens of thousands of lives every year.”

The letter, addressed to Subcommittee Chairman **Roy Blunt** (R-MO) and Ranking Member **Patty Murray** (D-WA), urged lawmakers to appropriate full funding for two key programs that will invest in the nation’s addiction treatment workforce during a time when the country is grappling with a deadly opioid overdose crisis, as well as a shortage of professionals trained to provide addiction treatments that are proven to save lives.

Specifically, the Senators highlighted the Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Workforce, which was authorized in last year’s landmark SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, and the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration Program, which was authorized in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act.

The Senators called for \$25 million in funding for the Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Workforce, which would provide student loan relief to addiction treatment professionals who commit to working in designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas or in counties where the average overdose death rate is higher than the national average.

Additionally, the Senators urged their colleagues to appropriate \$10 million in funding for grants to institutions that provide training opportunities 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.

“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,” the Senators wrote.

The Senate letter follows [two bipartisan House letters](#) sent earlier this month calling for House Appropriations Committee members to prioritize funding for these two programs.

Despite the growing need, there are currently too few clinicians with the requisite knowledge and training to prevent, diagnose, and treat the disease of addiction. According to the [latest estimates](#), nearly 21 million Americans needed treatment for SUD in 2017, but only 4 million received any form of treatment. Furthermore, addiction training is still too rare in American medical education. Since addiction medicine was only formally recognized as a medical subspecialty in 2016, the field is still catching up with other specialties in terms of available teaching and training opportunities. More investment is needed to close the existing treatment gap.

[To view the letter, Click here.](#)

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### **About ASAM**

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 6,000 physicians, clinicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction. For more information, visit [www.ASAM.org](http://www.ASAM.org).