



ASAM American Society of
Addiction Medicine

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Media Contact

Rebecca Reid

410-212-3843

reid@schmidtpa.com

ASAM Applauds Bipartisan Congressional Letters Urging Strategic Investments in the Addiction Treatment Workforce

*Congressional Leaders Call on House Appropriators to Fund Two Critical Programs Designed
to Increase the Ranks of Qualified Addiction Treatment Professionals in High-Need
Communities*

Rockville, MD – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) applauds a bipartisan group of lawmakers who sent letters this week urging their colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee to prioritize funding for two critical programs that would increase the ranks of qualified, well-trained addiction treatment professionals in high-need communities across the United States. Both programs were authorized in previous legislation and must now be funded.

“We applaud Congressional leaders for recognizing the importance of fully funding these vital programs that will train and incentivize more students and professionals to specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction,” said Kelly J. Clark, MD, MBA, DFAPA, DFASAM, president of ASAM. “We cannot adequately address the current opioid overdose epidemic and prevent future crises related to substance use disorder without a workforce equipped to provide evidence-based treatment on the front lines. Lives are at stake and the time for action is now.”

The first [letter](#), led by Representatives **Katherine Clark** (D-MA) and **Hal Rogers** (R-KY) and signed by 43 members, calls for \$25 million in funding for the Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Workforce, which was authorized in last year’s landmark opioid legislation, the [SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act](#). This program 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.

A second [letter](#), led by Representatives **Ann Kuster** (D-NH), **Antonio Delgado** (D-NY) and **John Katko** (R-NY) and signed by 39 lawmakers, calls on Congress 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. This program was authorized in the [21st Century Cures Act](#) in 2016.

The need is acute: According to the [latest estimates](#), 21 million Americans needed treatment for SUD in 2017, but only 4 million received any form of treatment. 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. Furthermore, addiction training is not commonly included 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.

Strategic investments are needed now to attract more students and professionals to the addiction medicine specialty and deploy qualified treatment professionals to high-need areas.

“Prioritizing funding for these two programs in the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations bills will bring us one step closer to ensuring the millions of Americans living with SUD are able to access evidence-based treatment for their disease,” Dr. Clark concluded.

To view the letters, [CLICK HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

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About the American Society of Addiction Medicine

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.