



ASAM American Society of
Addiction Medicine

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**ASAM Commends Bipartisan Funding Boost
For Two Critical Addiction Treatment Workforce Programs**

*House Appropriations Committee yesterday approved
a much-needed investment in the addiction treatment workforce*

Rockville, MD – Today the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) praised the House Appropriations Committee for including an increase in funding for two critical addiction treatment workforce programs in its FY 2021 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. Both programs will have a significant impact on America’s addiction prevention and treatment infrastructure by addressing workforce shortages, encouraging more medical professionals to specialize in caring for patients with substance use disorder (SUD), and ultimately saving lives as the United States continues to grapple with a deadly drug overdose crisis now escalating in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We commend the committee for increasing funding for these vital programs, which are essential for bolstering America’s addiction treatment workforce and an action that will save lives,” said Paul H. Earley, MD, DFASAM, president of ASAM. “Given the strains on America’s addiction treatment workforce and the growing need for evidence-based addiction prevention and treatment – challenges that have been exacerbated by the current COVID-19 crisis – it is imperative that the Senate now see the effort through by also prioritizing this critical funding.”

The bill passed by the committee yesterday includes \$17 million – a \$5 million increase over FY 2020 levels – for the **Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Workforce**, which addresses workforce shortages by providing for the repayment of education loans for individuals working in full-time addiction treatment jobs that involve direct patient care in either a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area or a county where the overdose death rate exceeds the national average. This program is critical because it helps increase the ranks of a well-trained addiction treatment workforce in high-need communities across

America by equipping the frontline professionals who prevent and treat addiction, provide recovery support, and work with their patients to reduce the negative consequences associated with substance use.

The legislation also includes a \$15 million increase for the **Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration** program, which is designed to make grants to institutions, including medical schools and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), to support training for medical fellows in addiction psychiatry and addiction medicine, as well as nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others, to provide addiction treatment in underserved communities. The \$41.7 million proposed today for this program will go a long way to encouraging more health professionals to specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing SUD in high-need areas across the country.

Both programs benefitted from bipartisan support with **Reps. Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM) and Brett Guthrie (R-KY)** leading a bipartisan letter earlier this year for the loan repayment program and **Reps. Annie Kuster (D-NH), Antonio Delgado (D-NY) and John Katko (R-NY)** spearheading a bipartisan letter for the training demonstration program.

Of note, the committee’s accompanying report highlights the dearth of addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry fellowship opportunities that focus on the pediatric and adolescent population—stating it’s troubling given that the onset of mental health and substance use disorders is most likely to occur at a young age. As a result, the report strongly encourages the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to “include an adequate number of funding awards to fellowship programs focused on increasing the number of board-certified pediatric and adolescent addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry subspecialists.”

FY2020 marked the first year these two programs were included in Congressional appropriations. As a result, on June 2, 2020, HHS, through HRSA, [awarded](#) \$20.3 million to 44 recipients to increase the number of fellows at accredited addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry fellowship programs. To date, 78 addiction medicine fellowships are currently accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME).

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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.