

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Due to your leadership, Congress 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. But there is much more to do in our nation's battle against substance use disorder (SUD) – particularly regarding the severe shortage of physicians, nurses, and other health care workers who are on the front lines of this crisis.

There are simply too few physicians and other clinicians with the requisite knowledge and training to prevent, diagnose, and treat addiction—a chronic disease that, like diabetes or heart disease, requires evidence-based, clinically appropriate treatment. 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 is due in part to a shortage in this field that could reach an estimated 250,000 workers by 2025. The newly released 2019 National Drug Control Strategy recognized this need by citing “critical shortages in trained and professional addiction service providers” as a key factor contributing to the treatment gap.

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 March 2019, only 66 of our nation's 187 accredited medical schools offer addiction medicine fellowships, and only 45 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 urge you to include \$10 million within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to create the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration Program, authorized in the 21st Century CURES Act.

This program 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.

Funding this program would allow more individuals to pursue and afford SUD treatment education and training, and 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.

Sincerely,



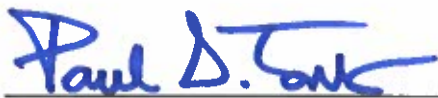
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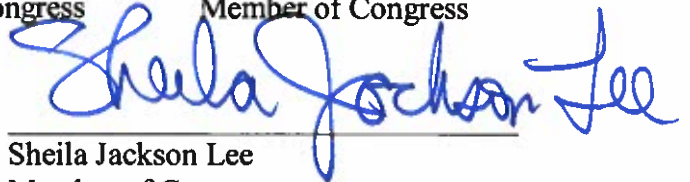
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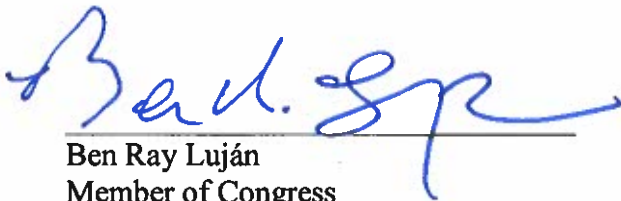
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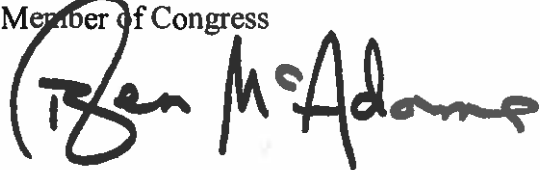
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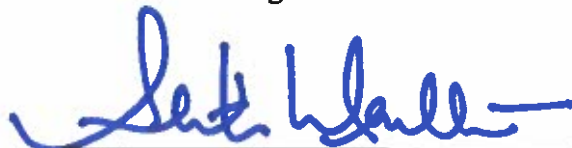
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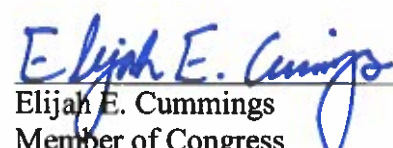
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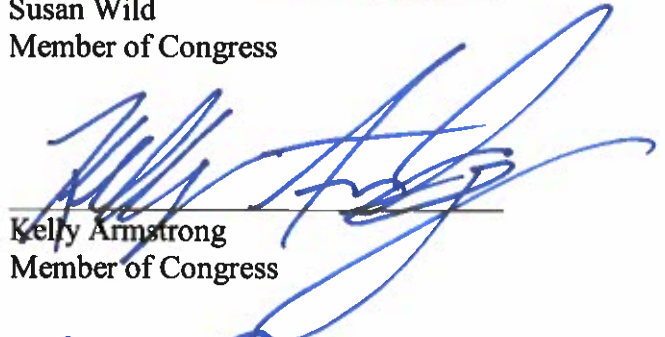
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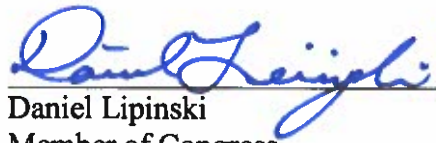
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