

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:

Thanks 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. This was an historic achievement. Unfortunately, there is much more to do in our nation's battle against substance use disorder (SUD), particularly regarding a severe shortage of physicians, nurses, 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 treatment. Indeed, the newly released 2019 National Drug Control Strategy identified a continued treatment gap that is due in part to "critical shortages in trained and professional addiction service providers." 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 a 2009 estimate – 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. This shortage in this field could reach an estimated 250,000 workers by 2025.

Last year, Democrats and Republicans joined together and successfully passed H.R. 6, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. Among other beneficial provisions, Section 7071 of this legislation created the Substance Use Disorder Loan Repayment Program, which will provide up to \$250,000 in loan repayment for qualifying addiction treatment providers working in areas of need. This funding would encourage more individuals to pursue education and training for SUD treatment and significantly increase the number of qualified experts available to help so many in desperate need of care.

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2020 Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate the full \$25 million authorized in Section 7071 so that the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) can begin this program and address the SUD workforce shortage. We also ask that you clarify that the name of this program is the "Loan Repayment Program for Substance Use Disorder Treatment Workforce" as H.R. 6 designated. HRSA is currently processing applications for

the "Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program" within the National Health Service Corps, and we believe that could cause confusion to future applicants.

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,


KATHERINE CLARK
Member of Congress


HAROLD ROGERS
Member of Congress



ALMA ADAMS
Member of Congress


ANDY BARR
Member of Congress


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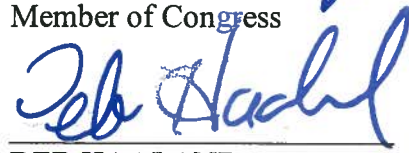

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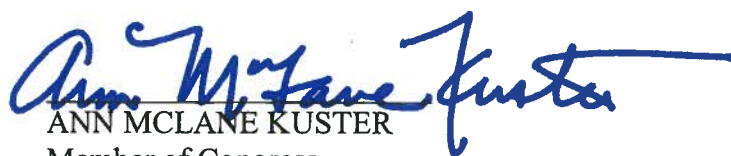

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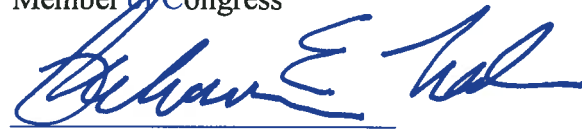

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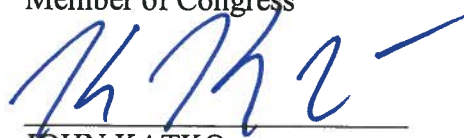

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