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ASAM, AAAP, ACAAM Praise House Committee on Ways & Means for Advancing Bipartisan Opioid Workforce Act

Legislation to Expand the Addiction Treatment Workforce Would Create 1,000 Additional Residency Positions Over Five-Year Period

Rockville, MD – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP), and the American College of Academic Addiction Medicine (ACAAM) today praised the House Committee on Ways & Means for advancing bipartisan legislation to expand the substance use disorder (SUD) workforce.

The Opioid Workforce Act of 2019 (H.R. 3414), introduced by Representatives Brad Schneider (D-IL), Susan Brooks (R-IN), Ann Kuster (D-NH), and Elise Stefanik (R-NY), would help address the national shortage of addiction physician specialists by increasing the number of resident physician positions available in hospitals that either have or are developing residency programs in addiction psychiatry or addiction medicine (or pain medicine). Hospitals may also receive slots for the associated number of residents training in a pre-requisite program necessary for the number of residents that will train in those programs. Following its introduction, the legislation was referred to the House Committee on Ways & Means, where today it was approved.

“We commend House Ways & Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal and other Committee members for taking an important step in strengthening the addiction treatment workforce,” said Paul H. Earley, MD, DFASAM, president of ASAM. “We would also like to recognize the leadership of Representatives Brad Schneider, Susan Brooks, Ann Kuster, Elise Stefanik, and the other cosponsors of this crucial legislation.”

Research has shed much-needed light about the disease of addiction over the past several decades. It has shown that many psychiatric disorders, infectious diseases, and other chronic conditions frequently co-occur with addiction; untreated addiction exacerbates these other conditions, and untreated infectious or other chronic diseases complicate addiction treatment. More specifically, people with opioid use disorder can also be at risk for self-harm and suicide.

“With today’s vote, Congressional leaders have taken an important step towards addressing the addiction treatment gap, which currently leaves millions of patients without access to medically necessary services,” said Shelly Greenfield, MD, MPH, president of AAAP. “We applaud House Ways & Means Committee members for championing this important issue and urge their congressional colleagues to support H.R. 3414.”

It is [estimated](#) that nearly 21 million Americans needed treatment for SUD in 2017, but only 4 million reported receiving any form of SUD treatment or ancillary services. The SUD workforce shortage represents a serious barrier to comprehensively integrating addiction medicine and addiction psychiatry within the U.S. healthcare system. By creating 1,000 additional residency positions over a five-year period, H.R. 3414 would strengthen the pipeline of addiction physician specialists at a time when the workforce is severely under-equipped to meet the needs of millions of Americans living with SUD.

“We applaud this step taken by the committee to scale up America's fellowship trained addiction medicine workforce. Trained physicians are essential to giving patients and their families the standard of care they need and deserve,” said Kevin Kunz, MD, MPH, DFASAM, Executive Vice President of ACAAM.

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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.

About AAAP

The American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) is a professional medical society comprised of psychiatrists, faculty, medical students, residents and fellows and related health professionals committed to evidence-based clinical practices and research in the prevention, identification and treatment of substance use disorders and co-occurring mental disorders. AAAP’s mission includes promoting high quality evidence-based screening, assessment and treatment for substance use disorders and co-occurring mental disorders; translating and disseminate evidence-based research to clinical practice and public policy; strengthening Addiction Psychiatry specialty training and foster careers in Addiction Psychiatry, and providing

evidence-based addiction education to health care trainees and health professionals to enhance patient care and promote recovery. For more information, visit www.aaap.org.

About ACAAM

The American College of Academic Addiction Medicine (ACAAM)'s mission is to promote academic excellence and leadership in addiction medicine. ACAAM began as the American Board of Addiction Medicine Foundation in 2007; was renamed The Addiction Medicine Foundation (TAMF) in 2015; and became ACAAM on January 1, 2019. In 2017, two landmark events brought the field of addiction medicine into mainstream medicine and health care: the addiction medicine examination transitioned to the ABMS member board, the American Board of Preventive Medicine, and ACGME began the first accreditations of addiction medicine fellowships. By January 2019, over 60 fellowships had been established. The minimal number of ACGME fellowships needed to meet the projected need for addiction medicine physicians is 125. ACAAM and its supporting organizations intend to meet or exceed this objective. For more information, visit www.acaam.org.