

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Chair  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and  
Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related  
Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you develop the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2024, we urge you to provide increased funding for two critical substance use disorder (SUD) workforce programs: the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Loan Repayment Program (STAR-LRP) and the Addiction Medicine Fellowship (AMF) Program. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated what was already a devastating substance use disorder crisis, and our country's health care workforce has overcome unprecedented challenges to provide care for those struggling throughout the pandemic. It is critical that lawmakers provide additional support for the SUD treatment and recovery workforce, and work to expand access to comprehensive and evidence-based treatment and services for those grappling with substance use disorder.

Thanks to your leadership, Congress took critical steps toward addressing our country's SUD workforce shortage by funding the STAR-LRP at \$40 million, and the AMF Program at \$25 million, in Fiscal Year 2023. But there is much more to do in our nation's battle against substance use disorder – including ensuring comprehensive and affordable training for our physicians, nurses, behavioral health professionals, and other health care workers.

As we look to the upcoming fiscal year, it is critical that Congress continue to build on these efforts. According to the latest Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Survey of Drug Use and Health, in 2021, 46.3 million people aged 12 or older had a SUD in the past year; however, only 4.1 million people aged 12 or older received any form of SUD treatment in the past year.<sup>i</sup> Further, SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Workforce Report describes the tremendous gap between the number of behavioral health professionals that are currently available to treat SUD and what is needed to help millions of Americans suffering from SUD.<sup>ii</sup> In recognition of the worsening SUD crisis throughout the country, Congress must expand support for the health care professionals who treat SUD and serve on the frontlines.

First, the STAR-LRP helps individuals who pursue full-time substance use disorder treatment jobs in high-need geographic areas repay their student loans. Demand for this program has been overwhelming. In Fiscal Year 2021, 3,184 people applied for loan repayment but only 255 received it, because of limited funding. Therefore, we urge you to provide \$50 million for this program in Fiscal Year 2024, an increase of \$10 million. Congress funds the program as a set-aside within the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training program.

Second, the AMF Program awards grants to certain institutions to expand the number of fellows trained as addiction medicine physicians and addiction psychiatrists who work in underserved, community-based settings that integrate primary care with mental health disorder and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services. As of March 2023, there were only 96 ACGME-accredited addiction medicine fellowship programs in

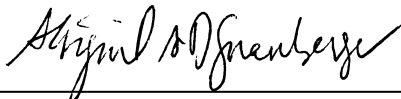
the nation – far below the recommended goal of 125 fellowships by 2022 set by the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Abuse and the Opioid Epidemic over five years ago. Therefore, we urge you to provide \$30 million for this program, an increase of \$5 million, in Fiscal Year 2024. Congress funds the AMF Program as a set-aside within the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration program, which is also within the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training program.

We recognize the difficult task you face in balancing the many needs of our nation in the Fiscal Year 2024 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, and we appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,




Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



Abigail Spanberger  
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
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Lori Trahan  
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Brittany Pettersen  
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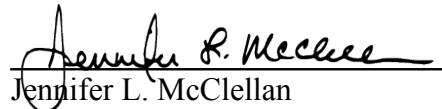
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Lisa Blunt Rochester  
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Earl Blumenauer  
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Jennifer L. McClellan  
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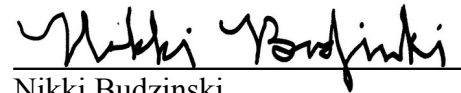
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Diana DeGette  
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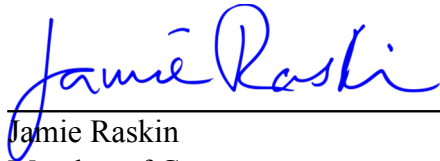
Colin Z. Allred  
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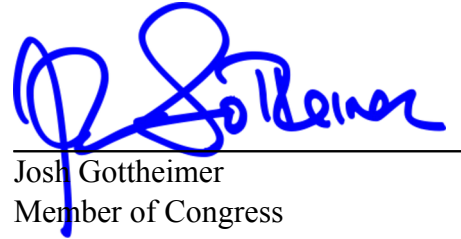
Angie Craig  
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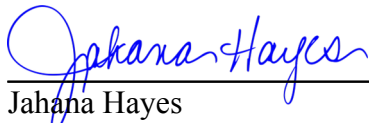
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Jamie Raskin  
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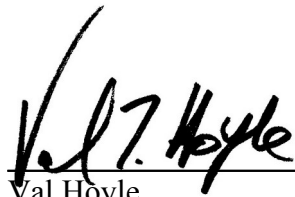
Josh Gottheimer  
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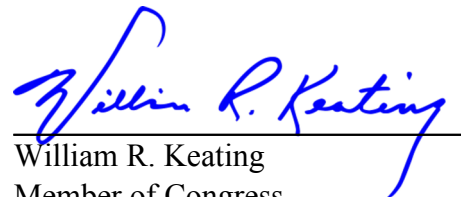
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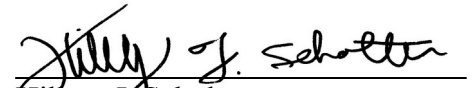



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Ilhan Omar  
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<sup>i</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2022). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP22-07-01-005, NSDUH Series H-57). Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2021-nsduh-annual-national-report>

<sup>ii</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. “Behavioral Health Workforce Report.” 2020. <https://www.mamh.org/assets/files/behavioral-health-workforce-report.pdf>.