

February 1, 2024

The Honorable Brad Schneider
U.S. House of Representatives
300 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Valadao
U.S. House of Representatives
2465 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Annie Kuster
U.S. House of Representatives
2201 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Carey
U.S. House of Representatives
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Kelly
U.S. House of Representatives
1707 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Schneider, Valadao, Kuster, Carey, and Kelly:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am pleased to offer our support for H.R. 7050, the “Substance Use Disorder Workforce Act,” which would provide 1,000 additional Medicare-supported graduate medical education (GME) positions in hospitals that have, or are in the process of establishing, accredited residency programs in addiction medicine, addiction psychiatry, or pain medicine.

The United States is in the midst of an epidemic of illicit drug-related overdoses and deaths, stemming primarily from illicitly manufactured fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, methamphetamine, and cocaine. Compounding this growing epidemic is a continued shortage in our health care workforce. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in 2017, an estimated 20.7 million Americans over the age of 12 had a substance use disorder related to alcohol or illicit drug use, but only 1.5 percent received any substance use treatment.¹ Moreover, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over the past year, nearly 106,000 Americans died of a drug-related overdose.² Illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl analogs were involved in approximately 70,000 deaths; methamphetamine was involved in nearly 33,000 deaths, and cocaine and psychostimulants nearly 53,000 deaths in 2021.³ Increasing the workforce also will help directly address long-standing inequities that have limited care to evidence-based treatment for substance use disorders and pain for Black and Brown Americans.

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHFFR2017/NSDUHFFR2017.pdf>.

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>.

³ <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>.

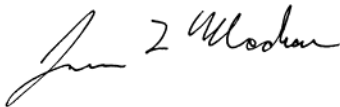
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Workforce experts predict that the U.S. will face a significant physician shortage for both primary care and specialty physicians over the next 10 years if training positions are not expanded, with the Association of American Medical Colleges predicting a shortage of 124,000 physicians by 2034.⁴ Yet, while new medical schools are opening and existing medical schools are increasing their enrollment to meet the need for more physicians, federal support for residency positions remains subject to an outdated cap that still falls dramatically short of the needs of the U.S. population, despite Congress providing 1,000 additional residency positions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, and an additional 200 positions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. This legislation would help to minimize this shortage and bolster the numbers of health care professionals dedicated to serving on the front lines and battling the nation's drug overdose epidemic each day.

As health care professionals, we are dedicated to improving public health and ensuring patients have access to proper care when and where they need it. There is much more that must be done to bring this epidemic under control, and we remain committed to working with Congress and the Administration to take the necessary steps to achieve that goal.

We appreciate your efforts to expand GME funding in accredited residency programs in addiction medicine, addiction psychiatry, and pain medicine, and look forward to working with you to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD

⁴ <https://www.aamc.org/media/54681/download?attachment>.