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The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), it gives me great pleasure to support the nomination of Vivek Murthy, MD, to be the Surgeon General of the United States Public Health Service.

As the 19th Surgeon General during the Obama-Biden Administration, Dr. Murthy played a vital leadership role in the efforts to protect the nation from the Zika and Ebola viruses. With new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations at their highest levels to date, Dr. Murthy's experience with these previous viral threats will be extremely helpful.

The AMA also worked closely with Dr. Murthy during his previous tenure as Surgeon General on the epidemic of drug-related overdose deaths, a nationwide public health emergency that was already accelerating even before COVID-19. Dr. Murthy issued a landmark report in 2016 on this epidemic, "Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health." This report used scientific data to clearly explain that addiction is a chronic disease, not a moral failing. It also demonstrated both the devastating toll of stigma on the lives of patients with this disease and the potential for patients to lead satisfying, productive lives if access to evidence-based treatment is expanded.

Dr. Murthy did groundbreaking work to address the destructive health impact of e-cigarette use, issuing the first-ever report by a U.S. Surgeon General on e-cigarette use among youth and young adults. Dr. Murthy's report came at a time when e-cigarette use had exploded, growing 900 percent from 2011 to 2015, to make them the most commonly used form of tobacco among youth in the US, surpassing all conventional tobacco products. Dr. Murthy's report pointed to the need to take action to protect our nation's young people from being harmed by these products. Also, although the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the adverse effects of stress and burnout on physicians and other health professionals, Dr. Murthy began working to address this issue long ago.

Vivek Murthy, MD, is a visionary health care leader with vast experience tackling some of the toughest medical and public health challenges our nation has faced. The AMA strongly urges that the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions quickly recommend Dr. Murthy's confirmation as Surgeon General of the US Public Health Service.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD