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August 27, 2020

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
United States Senate  
231 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
United States Senate  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young  
United States Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD  
United States Senate  
520 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for S. 4349-Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act

Dear Senators Kaine, Young, Reed, and Cassidy:

On behalf of our physician and medical student members, the American Medical Association (AMA) is writing to express our support for S. 4349, the “Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act.”

The AMA is deeply concerned about the intensifying mental health and burnout crisis among physicians and other health care professionals that has only been exacerbated by COVID-19. More than half of all physicians in the United States [report](#) experiencing substantial symptoms of burnout, with the most severe symptoms occurring among those working at the front lines of medicine in fields such as emergency medicine, family medicine, and internal medicine. In addition, physicians are at a significantly increased [risk of suicide](#) compared to the general population, with suicide rates 40 percent higher in males and 130 percent higher in females.

Recent studies have shown that 49 percent of health care providers working directly with COVID-19 patients in Italy and China are experiencing post-traumatic stress symptoms. Moreover, about 20 percent of health care workers in the [studies](#) had symptoms of depression, anxiety, and high perceived stress. A [recent study](#) showed that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a median increase of 60 percent in physician emotional exhaustion when compared to pre-COVID levels. Although physicians have received accolades from their communities, numerous physicians [have described](#) feeling lost, alone, and unable to sleep. Not only are physicians in constant fear due to the uncertainty of their patients health, but there is also considerable anxiety surrounding the potential risks to their own health and the health of their families.

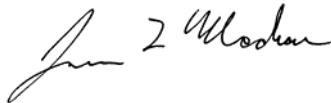
Bolstering our mental health infrastructure is essential to help support physicians and other health care providers who have been working tirelessly to heal our nation from the devastation brought on during the COVID-19 emergency. The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act would help to achieve this goal by: establishing grants for health care professionals to help create evidence-based strategies to reduce burnout and the associated secondary mental health conditions related to job stress; establishing a national campaign to encourage health care professionals to prioritize their mental health and to use

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Page 2

available mental and behavioral health services; establishing grants for employee education, peer support programming; and conducting a comprehensive study on the mental health and burn out of health care professionals.

As the COVID-19 pandemic endures and physicians continue to face highly traumatic situations, our health care professionals should not have to suffer in silence. For these reasons, the AMA supports this legislation. Thank you for your leadership in introducing the bipartisan Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act.

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