



June 17, 2020

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi  
United States House of Representatives  
115 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Krishnamoorthi:

On behalf of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and our 41,000 members, thank you for introducing the “Coronavirus Health Care Worker Wellness Act of 2020.” This important legislation seeks to address the significant mental health challenges facing emergency physicians and other frontline health care workers who continue to provide lifesaving care during the most serious public health crisis of our lifetime. As the health care safety net providers, ACEP is grateful for your continued leadership on this important issue.

At our core, emergency physicians are healers, and we seek to provide all of our patients with the compassionate care they need and deserve. Emergency medicine can be a turbulent and overwhelming field for all the physicians, nurses, and other health care providers who are faced with life and death consequences each day. In fact, emergency physicians and emergency medicine residents can experience high rates of burnout at 65 percent during their career, and emergency medicine ranks among the top five specialties for burnout. These challenges have been exacerbated by the unprecedented scale and impact of the coronavirus on our health care system, and many emergency physicians have been deeply affected by the toll it has taken on far too many of our patients and their families.

Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is taking a toll on the mental health of emergency physicians as well, and we do not yet know the full extent it will have on those working on the front lines. This virus is the greatest public health threat of our time, yet many emergency physicians feel they have not been provided with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) they need to stay safe and continue providing care. Some hospitals and facilities have been stretched beyond capacity, forcing emergency physicians to make excruciating decisions due to sparse resources. And still many emergency physicians maintain social distance, isolating themselves away from friends and family in order to keep them safe and healthy – often retreating to solitude in hotel rooms, garages, or even tents in backyards for weeks and months at a time.

The Coronavirus Health Care Worker Wellness Act seeks to address the significant mental health challenges affecting physicians and health care workers through both near- and long-term strategies. Recognizing the pressing need for mental health services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, your legislation provides grants to establish or expand mental wellness programs for health care workers. Over the longer-term, the bill also directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to commission a comprehensive study on the factors contributing to poor mental health and burnout for health care workers, what barriers to treatment may exist, and what solutions may be effective addressing these issues.

Once again, thank you for your continued leadership and advocacy to ensure that emergency physicians and health care workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 response have access to the mental health resources they need so that they in turn are able to continue providing the lifesaving care patients need and deserve.

Sincerely,

William P. Jaquis, MD, MSHQS, FACEP  
ACEP President

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE

2121 K Street NW, Suite 325  
Washington, DC 20037-1886

202-728-0610  
800-320-0610  
www.acep.org

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