

March 25, 2021

The Honorable Tim Kaine
U.S. Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Todd Young
U.S. Senate
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Wild
U.S. House of Representatives
1027 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David McKinley
U.S. House of Representatives
2239 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Kaine and Young and Representatives Wild and McKinley:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we would like to thank you for introducing the “Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act” (S. 610/H.R. 1667). This bipartisan, bicameral legislation will help reduce and prevent mental and behavioral health conditions, suicide, and burnout, as well as increase access to evidence-based treatment for physicians, medical students, and other health care professionals, especially those who continue to be overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stigma surrounding mental illness is a well-known barrier to seeking care among the general population, but it can have an even stronger impact among health care professionals. For most physicians and other clinicians, seeking treatment for mental health sparks legitimate fear of resultant loss of licensure, loss of income, or other meaningful career setbacks as a result of ongoing stigma. Such fears have deterred them from accessing necessary mental health care, leaving many to suffer in silence, or worse. In fact, physicians have a significantly higher risk of dying by suicide than the general public.

Ensuring clinicians can freely seek mental health treatment and services without fear of professional setback means their mental health care needs can be resolved, rather than hidden away and suffered through. Furthermore, optimal clinician mental health is essential to ensuring that patients have a strong and capable health care workforce to provide the care they need and deserve.

To ensure patient access to medically necessary care can be maintained, it is vital that we work to preserve and protect the health of our medical workforce. Your legislation will help establish grants for training health profession students, residents, or health care professionals to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, substance use disorders, and other mental health conditions; identify and disseminate best practices for reducing and preventing suicide and burnout among health care professionals; establish a national education and awareness campaign to encourage health care workers to seek support and treatment; establish grants for employee education, peer-support programming, and mental and behavioral health treatment; and commission a federal study into health care professional mental health and burnout, as well as barriers to seeking appropriate care.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue and for introducing this legislation. We look forward to working with you to ensure the “Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act” is signed into law.

Sincerely,

American College of Emergency Physicians
American Academy of Dermatology Association
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Clinical Urologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Radiology
American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Gastroenterological Association
American Medical Association
American Medical Group Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Society of Anesthesiologists
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation
Emergency Nurses Association
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Spine Specialists
Physicians Advocacy Institute
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Vascular Surgery
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons