

April 27, 2022

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education &
Related Agencies
U.S. House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Thanks to your leadership, Congress appropriated \$24 million to fund the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery (STAR) Loan Repayment Program in the Fiscal Year 2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Although we have made progress, there continues to be plenty of work left in our nation's battle against substance use disorders (SUD), particularly on the severe shortage of physicians, nurses, and other health care workers who have the necessary training to treat individuals suffering from the disease of addiction.

According to the latest Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Survey of Drug Use and Health, 40.3 million people aged 12 or older (14.5 percent) had a substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year; however, only 6.5 percent of people living with SUD received any form of treatment. In addition, SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Workforce Report describes the tremendous gap between providers that are currently available to treat SUD and what is needed to help millions of Americans struggling with SUD.

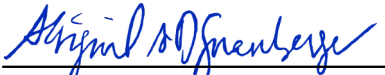
Acknowledging this need, Democrats and Republicans joined together and successfully passed H.R. 6, the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act in 2018. Among other beneficial provisions, Section 7071 of this legislation created this program, which provides up to \$250,000 in loan repayment for qualifying addiction treatment providers working in areas of SUD need. This funding would encourage more individuals to pursue education and training for SUD treatment and significantly increase the number of qualified experts available to help those in desperate need of care. The demand for this program has been overwhelming. Last year alone, HRSA received over 3,000 applicants for the STAR Loan Repayment Program but only issued 255 awards. Despite obligating all appropriated funding, only 8 percent of eligible applicants received an award and the average amount received was less than half of the \$250,000 maximum allowed under statute.


The current addiction treatment gap will never be closed without strong support for the workforce. To make a meaningful and sustainable impact on the current opioid epidemic and to avert future substance-related epidemics, it is imperative that our country make strategic investments that incentivize clinicians to specialize in the prevention and treatment of SUD. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2023 Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate \$50 million to the STAR Loan Repayment


Program so that the Health Resources and Services Administration can continue to implement this program and address the SUD workforce shortage.


We recognize the difficult task you face in balancing the many needs of our nation in the Fiscal Year 2023 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, and we appreciate your consideration of this request.


Sincerely,



Abigail Davis Spanberger
Member of Congress



David B. McKinley P.E.
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress


Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

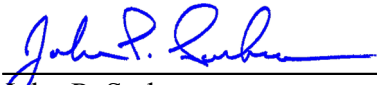

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress


John Katko
Member of Congress


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John P. Sarbanes
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