Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Service, Education
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2025

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member DeLauro,

As you develop the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations legislation for Fiscal Year 2026, we urge you to provide increased funding for two important substance use disorder (SUD) workforce programs: the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery Loan Repayment Program (STAR-LRP) and the Addiction Medicine Fellowship (AMF) Program. The COVID-19 pandemic led to historic numbers of healthcare professionals leaving the workforce, and our country's SUD treatment and recovery health care workforce has struggled to return to pre-pandemic levels. It is critical that lawmakers provide additional support for the SUD treatment and recovery workforce, and work to expand access to comprehensive and evidence-based treatment and services for those grappling with substance use disorder.

Thanks to your leadership, Congress took critical steps toward addressing our country's SUD workforce shortage by funding the STAR-LRP at $40 million, and the AMF Program at $25 million, in Fiscal Year 2025. But there is much more to do in our nation's battle against substance use disorder – including ensuring comprehensive and affordable training for our physicians, nurses, behavioral health professionals, and other health care workers.

As we look to the upcoming fiscal year, it is critical that Congress continue to build on these efforts. According to the latest Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Survey of Drug Use and Health, in 2023, nearly 49 million people aged 12 or older had a SUD in the past year; however, only 13 million people aged 12 or older received any form of SUD treatment in the past year. Further, SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Workforce Report describes the tremendous gap between the number of behavioral health professionals that are currently available to treat SUD and what is needed to help millions of Americans suffering from SUD. In recognition of the impact of the SUD crisis on American families, Congress must expand support for the health care professionals who treat SUD and serve on the frontlines.

First, the STAR-LRP helps individuals who pursue full-time substance use disorder treatment jobs in high-need geographic areas repay their student loans. Demand for this program has been

overwhelming. In Fiscal Year 2021, 3,184 people applied for loan repayment but only 255 received it, because of limited funding. **Therefore, we urge you to provide $50 million for the STAR-LRP in Fiscal Year 2026, an increase of $10 million. Congress funds the STAR-LRP as a set-aside within the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training program.**
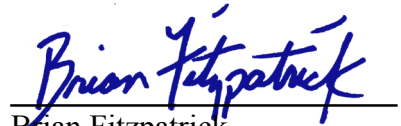
Second, the AMF Program awards grants to certain institutions to expand the number of fellows trained as addiction medicine physicians and addiction psychiatrists who work in underserved, community-based settings that integrate primary care with mental health disorder and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services. As of March 2025, there were only 105 ACGME-accredited addiction medicine fellowship programs in the nation – below the recommended goal of 125 fellowships by 2022 set by the President's Commission on Combating Drug Abuse and the Opioid Epidemic in 2017. **Therefore, we urge you to provide $30 million for the AMF Program in FY2026, an increase of $5 million, in Fiscal Year 2026. Congress funds the AMF Program as a set-aside within the Mental and Substance Use Disorder Workforce Training Demonstration program, which is also within the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training program.**

We recognize the difficult task you face in balancing the many needs of our nation in the Fiscal Year 2026 Labor-HHS appropriations bill, and we appreciate your consideration of this request.

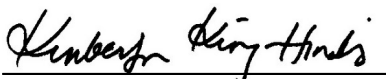Sincerely,

Brittany Pettersen
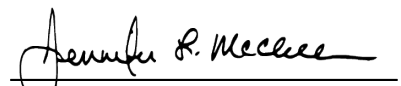Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

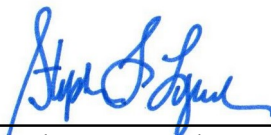Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

Kimberlyn King-Hinds
Member of Congress
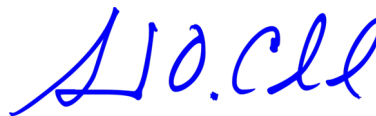
Jennifer L. McClellan
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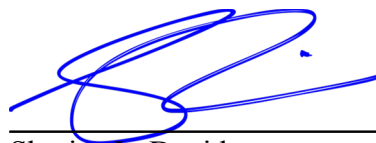
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress
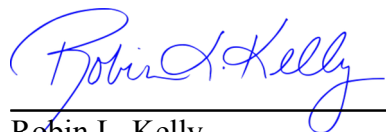
Angie Craig
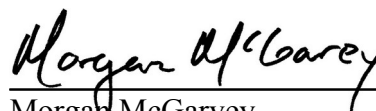Member of Congress

Val Hoyle
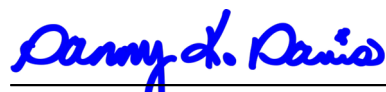Member of Congress

Sean Casten
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Sharice L. Davids
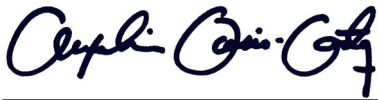Member of Congress

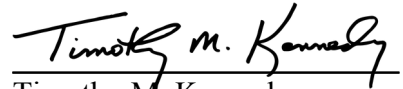Robin L. Kelly
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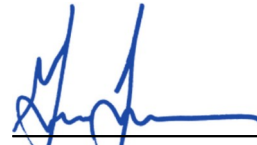
Raja Krishnamoorthi
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
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Timothy M. Kennedy
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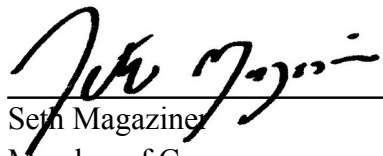Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress
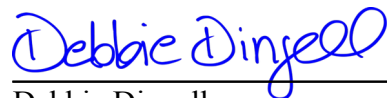
Greg Landsman
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Chellie Pingree
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Seth Magaziner
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J. Luis Correa
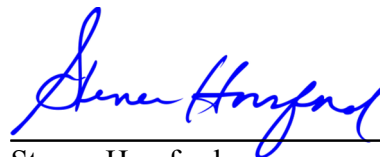Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
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Cleo Fields
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Ayanna Pressley
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Thomas R. Suozzi
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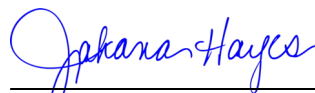Steven Horsford
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Dan Goldman
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James P. McGovern
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Andrea Salinas
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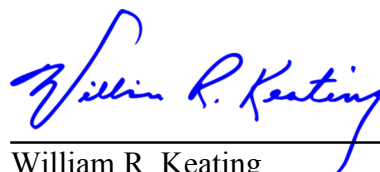
Jahana Hayes
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Diana DeGette
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Maxine Dexter
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William R. Keating
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