

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Shelly Moore Capito
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20210

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education & Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Chair Capito and Ranking Member Baldwin:

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 critical 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. It is critical that lawmakers provide additional support for the substance misuse and behavioral health 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 substance use disorder 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.¹ 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.² In recognition of the continued behavioral health and substances misuse crisis throughout the country, 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

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2024). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2023 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP24-07-021, NSDUH Series H-59). Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2023-nsduh-annual-national-report>


² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. "Behavioral Health Workforce Report." 2020. <https://www.samhsa.gov/assets/files/behavioral-health-workforce-report.pdf>.

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 this program in Fiscal Year 2026, an increase of \$10 million.

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 – far below the recommended goal of 125 fellowships by 2022 set by the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Abuse and the Opioid Epidemic five years ago. Therefore, we urge you to provide \$30 million for this program, 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.

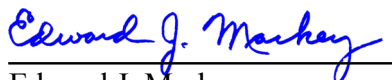
Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



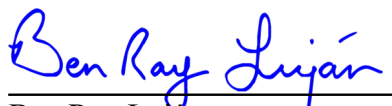
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



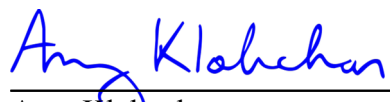
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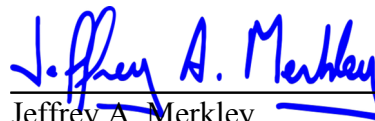
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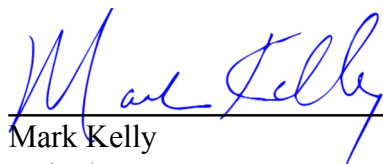
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