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ASAM Appreciates Continued Funding for Vital Addiction Workforce Programs, Urges Congress to Keep Working to Make Addiction Treatment More Accessible

Rockville, MD – Today, the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) thanked Congress for appropriating Fiscal Year 2024 funding for two vital programs that strengthen America’s addiction treatment workforce. ASAM expressed disappointment, however, that several much-needed policies to make addiction treatment more accessible were left out of the final package—including bipartisan legislation that would reauthorize and strengthen key federal programs to support patients with substance use disorders and increase access to methadone for Americans with opioid use disorder (OUD).

In its latest legislative package to keep parts of the federal government open, Congress included \$40M in funding for Fiscal Year 2024 for the [Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery \(STAR\) Loan Repayment Program](#), which provides up to \$250,000 in loan repayments to eligible health professionals who treat patients with addiction in an approved facility.

The legislation also included \$25M for the [Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program](#), which provides grant funding to accredited addiction medicine or addiction psychiatry fellowship programs that train fellows in community-based settings that integrate primary care with mental and substance use disorders prevention and treatment services.

“Continued funding for the Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery (STAR) Loan Repayment Program and the Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program is vital to help ensure more health professionals specialize in and treat addiction,” said Brian Hurley, MD, MBA, FAPA, DFASAM, president of ASAM.

“While we are pleased with this continued funding to strengthen the country’s addiction treatment workforce, ASAM is disappointed that several critically important policies to increase access to evidence-based care were left out of the final package, including the [SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Reauthorization Act \(SUPPORT Act\)](#) and the [Modernizing Opioid Treatment Access Act \(MOTAA\)](#),” continued Dr. Hurley.

Specifically, MOTAA is bipartisan legislation that would allow board-certified physicians in addiction medicine or addiction psychiatry to prescribe methadone for pharmacy dispensing. Under current regulations, only opioid treatment programs (OTPs) can dispense methadone for patients with OUD. MOTAA provides a critical step towards improving access since most US counties do not have OTPs. Methadone is safe and effective for patients when indicated, dispensed, and consumed properly, and appropriately expanding access to it has the potential to save lives and support recovery for Americans struggling with OUD who are challenged with accessing this life-saving medication.

Increasing access to evidence-based addiction treatment is more critical than ever. According to a [new study](#) in the *American Journal of Public Health*, close to half of Americans say they personally knew someone who died from a drug overdose—and nearly 5% say they know 6 or more people who died from a drug overdose. More than [110,000 predicted drug overdose deaths occurred](#) in the 12 months to October 2023, according to the latest data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“At a time when overdose deaths continue to reach historic tragic heights, we look forward to working with our leaders in Congress to pass the SUPPORT Act and MOTAA before this session of Congress ends,” concluded Dr. Hurley.

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About the American Society of Addiction Medicine

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 7,000 physicians, clinicians, and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction. For more information, visit www.ASAM.org.