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ASAM, AAAP, and ACAAM Applaud Senate Introduction of Bipartisan Opioid Workforce Act

Legislation to Expand the Addiction Treatment Workforce Would Create 1,000 Additional Residency Positions Over Five-Year Period

Rockville, MD – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) – the nation’s largest organization representing medical professionals dedicated to the prevention and treatment of addiction – joined with the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) and the American College of Academic Addiction Medicine (ACAAM) in applauding the introduction of the bipartisan Opioid Workforce Act of 2019 (S. 2892) in the United States Senate this week.

Introduced by Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), the Opioid Workforce Act would address the alarming national shortage of addiction physician specialists by increasing the number of resident physician positions available in hospitals that either have, or are developing, residency programs in addiction psychiatry, addiction medicine, or pain medicine. Hospitals may also receive additional slots for residents training in a pre-requisite program. Overall, the bill would increase the number of graduate medical education (GME) slots related to these specialties by 1,000 over a five-year period.

“We applaud Senators Hassan and Collins for championing this much-needed legislation, which will increase the number of fellowship-trained addiction medicine specialists and give more patients and families access to the standard of care they need and deserve,” said Paul H. Earley, MD, DFASAM, president of ASAM.

“We commend Senators Hassan and Collins for introducing this bipartisan bill, which will empower our nation to train a new generation of addiction psychiatry and addiction medicine

physician specialists to treat patients with substance use disorders and co-occurring mental disorders across the country,” said Shelly Greenfield, MD, MPH, president of AAAP.

“This bipartisan bill represents a major step toward bolstering America's addiction medicine workforce. Increasing the ranks of medical professionals trained to prevent and treat addiction begins to address a fundamental issue in our addiction treatment infrastructure and will give hope to patients needing access to care,” said Kevin Kunz, MD, MPH, DFASAM, Executive Vice President of ACAAM.

A House version of the bill (H.R. 3414) was introduced earlier this year by Representatives Brad Schneider (D-IL), Susan Brooks (R-IN), Ann Kuster (D-NH) and Elise Stefanik (R-NY).

The SUD workforce shortage represents a serious barrier to addiction treatment access and the integration of evidence-based addiction treatment practices into the broader healthcare system. In 2018, an [estimated](#) 21.2 million people aged 12 or older needed substance use treatment in the past year. By creating these 1,000 additional residency positions over a five-year period, S. 2892 would strengthen the pipeline of addiction physician specialists at a time when the workforce is severely under-equipped to meet the needs of millions of Americans living with substance use disorder and addiction.

ASAM, AAMC and AAAP urge lawmakers to support and swiftly pass the Opioid Workforce Act.

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About ASAM

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 6,000 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.

About AAAP

The American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP) is a professional medical society comprised of psychiatrists, faculty, medical students, residents and fellows and related health professionals committed to evidence-based clinical practices and research in the prevention, identification and treatment of substance use disorders and co-occurring mental disorders. AAAP's mission includes promoting high quality evidence-based screening, assessment and treatment for substance use disorders and co-occurring mental disorders; translating and disseminate evidence-based research to clinical practice and public policy; strengthening Addiction Psychiatry specialty training and foster careers in Addiction Psychiatry, and providing evidence-based addiction education to health care trainees and health professionals to enhance patient care and promote recovery. For more information, visit www.aaap.org.

About ACAAM

The American College of Academic Addiction Medicine (ACAAM)'s mission is to promote academic excellence and leadership in addiction medicine. ACAAM advances post-graduate fellowship training in addiction medicine across medical fields, bringing patients, families and communities access to prevention and treatment services. ACAAM works to build a workforce of fellowship trained addiction physicians to serve as clinical experts, consultants, faculty, researchers and change agents. For more information, visit www.acaam.org.