

September 17, 2020

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kaine, Young, Reed, and Cassidy:

As organizations that together represent over 590,000 frontline physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the American Osteopathic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association write to share our strong endorsement of the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* (S. 4349), a bill to address the behavioral health and well-being of physicians. We appreciate your acknowledgement of the need to bolster the mental health needs of our nation's doctors, particularly during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and fight the stigma around seeking necessary treatment and support.

We know the current pandemic has added a tremendous level of strain on medical professionals, many of whom are experiencing personal hardships as they care for distressed patients and manage their own families and their own health. Therefore, the legislation's introduction is a timely opportunity to respond to the mental health needs of our nation's frontline physicians. A July Primary Care Collaborative survey, 45 percent of physicians surveyed reported that their ability to bounce back or adjust to adversity has become limited and 38 percent report being maxed out with mental exhaustion. America's physicians are at a critical breaking point that must be addressed urgently.

Mental health data show that physicians in the United States face higher incidents of suicide than almost any other profession. The 2018 Medscape National Physician Depression and Burnout Report showed 66 percent of male physicians and 58 percent of female physicians revealed they were experiencing burnout, depression, or both. The study also discussed that many of the professionals were not seeking help and had no plans to do so because of barriers such as stigma and the professional risks associated with disclosing their treatment activities to medical boards.

The *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* is an important proposal because it aims to prevent and reduce incidences of suicide, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and long-term stress, sometimes referred to as "burnout." Through grants, education, and awareness campaigns - the legislation will help reduce stigma and identify resources for health care clinicians seeking assistance. S. 4349 also supports research on health care professional mental and behavioral health, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Again, we strongly support the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* and thank you for your leadership in developing this important legislation to address the behavioral health needs of America's physicians.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American College of Physicians

American Osteopathic Association

American Psychiatric Association