



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
COLLEGES OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

April 16, 2018

The Honorable Joe Donnelly
U.S. Senate
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Donnelly and Murkowski:

On behalf of the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine (AACOM), I offer support for S.2524, the *Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act of 2018*. Thank you for your leadership in introducing this vital legislation, which seeks to increase the number of qualified health professionals working in substance use disorder roles in areas where the opioid epidemic has impacted communities most.

AACOM represents the 34 accredited colleges of osteopathic medicine in the United States. These colleges are accredited to deliver instruction at 51 teaching locations in 32 states. Six of the colleges are public and 28 are private institutions. In the current academic year, these colleges are educating nearly 29,000 future physicians—more than 20 percent of all U.S. medical students.

AACOM applauds your efforts in working to address this crisis in our nation's health care system. As educators of future physicians, we strongly support policies, including the *Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act of 2018*, that aim to encourage health professionals to practice in medically underserved communities where there is a shortage of substance abuse disorder treatment professionals.

There is a clear need for programs that encourage greater connection and services between traditionally underserved communities and the physician workforce by creating opportunities for health professionals to practice in these regions of the country in exchange for loan repayment. S.2524 offers a much-needed solution to transition health professionals into medically underserved areas and reduce growing disparity in health care services in our country, which in turn will help combat the opioid epidemic.

On behalf of AACOM, I offer our support for the *Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act of 2018* and thank you for your leadership and dedication to supporting policies that make it more affordable for physicians and other health professionals to give back to underserved communities.

Respectfully,

Stephen C. Shannon, DO, MPH
President and CEO

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