



October 21, 2024

**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
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aamc.org

The Honorable Rick Larsen
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Annie Kuster
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Larsen and Kuster:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write in support of your bill, the Closing the Substance Use Care Gap Act, to reauthorize and expand the Harm Reduction Grant Program administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The AAMC is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 158 U.S. medical schools accredited by the [Liaison Committee on Medical Education](#); 13 accredited Canadian medical schools; nearly 500 academic health systems and teaching hospitals, including Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools, academic health systems and teaching hospitals, and the millions of individuals across academic medicine, including more than 201,000 full-time faculty members, 97,000 medical students, 158,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Following a 2022 merger, the Alliance of Academic Health Centers International broadened participation in the AAMC by 70 international academic health centers throughout five regional offices across the globe.

Academic health systems largely serve on the front lines of the country's safety net and invest in a wide scope of mental and behavioral health services, including treatment and recovery support for substance use disorders (SUD). Our members have seen firsthand the devastating impacts of the opioid epidemic and other SUDs on patients, families, and communities. While the nation has made strides in addressing these challenges, more robust efforts are necessary to meet the demand for care. Evidence-based harm reduction strategies, such as overdose prevention programs, play an important role in preventing deaths, reducing spread of infectious diseases, and connecting people to treatment.

While no single intervention on its own will fully resolve the challenges that individuals with substance use disorders face in accessing treatment, your bill would take an important step forward to continue and enhance SAMHSA's support for harm reduction work across the country. Thank you for your efforts, and we look forward to working with you as the legislation advances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle P. Turnipseed". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Danielle Turnipseed, JD, MHSA, MPP
Chief Public Policy Officer
Association of American Medical Colleges

cc: David J. Skorton, MD, AAMC President and CEO