

American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

July 1, 2020

The Honorable Brad Schneider
1432 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Don Bacon
1024 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Schneider and Bacon:

On behalf of the medical students, residents, fellows, and physician members of the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), I write in support of H.R. 2895, the “Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act.” This bill would modify the Conrad 30 Waiver program, which incentivizes qualified International Medical Graduates (IMGs) to serve in underserved communities. The bill would increase the number of waivers that a state may obtain each fiscal year from 30 to 35, if a certain number of waivers were used the previous year. It also would create more ways in which IMGs can meet the Conrad 30 program requirements.

It is unthinkable to limit our current physician workforce, particularly psychiatrists positioned to serve the mental health crisis resulting from the current pandemic and stay-at-home orders. Congress and the Administration must do everything possible to expand the physician workforce, especially the psychiatric workforce, which includes supporting lawfully present IMGs. IMGs are a critical part of the psychiatric workforce, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Recent data shows that 30.4 percent of child and adolescent psychiatrists are IMGs.¹

Prior to the pandemic, every state had a persistent severe or high shortage of child and adolescent psychiatrists,² limiting access to high-quality mental health care. Meanwhile, suicide is the second leading cause of death for those between the ages of 10 and 34.³ In 2018, over 14 percent of adolescents suffered from major depression, while 10 percent of all adolescents had a major depressive episode with severe impairment.⁴ One in five children have had or will suffer

¹ Active Physicians Who are International Medical Graduates by Specialty, 2017. Association of American Medical Colleges, available at: <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/workforce/interactive-data/active-physicians-who-are-international-medical-graduates-imgs-specialty-2017>.

² Workforce Maps by State. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, available at: https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Advocacy/Federal_and_State_Initiatives/Workforce_Maps/Home.aspx.

³ Suicide Statistics. National Institute of Mental Health, available at: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide.shtml>.

⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, available at:

from a mental illness, a trend that is likely to rise given recent reports of increased need of mental health services. According to a recent report, upwards of 154,000 additional deaths by suicide, overdose, or alcohol will occur in the U.S. from the resulting despair caused by the economic downturn.⁵ There will be a tremendous need for evidence-based mental health care from psychiatrists in the months and years ahead, including child and adolescent psychiatry services. This bill is a step in the right direction of increasing the physician workforce to meet that need.

Thank you for your work on this important public health issue. AACAP stands ready to work with you to gain passage and enactment of your critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabrielle A. Carlson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a large, sweeping, handwritten flourish that extends to the right and then loops back under the name.

Gabrielle A. Carlson, MD
President

<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018.pdf>.

⁵ Petterson, S., Westfall, J., Miller, B., *Projected Deaths of Despair During the Coronavirus Recession*, Well Being Trust and the Robert Graham Center for Policy Studies in Family Medicine and Primary Care, available at: https://wellbeingtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/WBT_Deaths-of-Despair_COVID-19-FINAL-FINAL.pdf.