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April 6, 2021

Rep. Connie Bernardy
563 State Office Building
100 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program Funding, House File 1283

Dear Chair Bernardy,

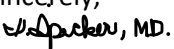
I wanted to personally thank you for including House File 1283 authored by Rep. Erin Koegel in your omnibus bill. This bill would provide needed funding for the Minnesota Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program where I am the Program Director.

The University of Minnesota Department of Psychiatry collaborates with HCMC to train physicians, especially from primary care, in the treatment of patients with addiction. A goal of the Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program is to increase the workforce especially in underserved and community-based settings and train fellows to be leaders in the community. **While the Addiction Medicine Fellowship has trained physicians for over 30 years who have entered practice sites around Minnesota, consistent funding has not been available, limiting the number of trainees. These requested funds will allow expansion into much needed addiction care in underserved community sites by increasing the flexibility of the program with creating salary support.**

The fellowship has achieved many successes through the years. Our fellows practice and work in diverse settings: academic, private practice, community underserved areas, with native populations, and primary care. The influence of the graduates reaches far: one of the fellows became President of the national organization, American Society of Addiction Medicine and has been a tireless advocate for patients with addiction and a policy maker. Project ECHO is such an example of the widespread influence our fellows have, in expanding access to all Minnesota clinicians on addiction treatment.

Of the more recent graduates, three are in community settings, two at HCMC, three at University or VAMC, and two are working with Native American populations. We have expanded the program to three and with funding, can continue to train more to better serve the population of Minnesota. All fellows are trained in evidence-based treatments. In particular, they are trained in the pharmacotherapies for addiction and most notably, buprenorphine, which is highly effective in reducing mortality from opioid use disorder.

This funding will help us more easily train physicians to treat Minnesotans suffering from addiction. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
 *Sheila Specker, MD.*

Sheila Specker, MD
Associate Professor
Addiction Psychiatrist
Program Director, Minnesota Addiction Medicine Fellowship