



April 27, 2023

Sen. Omar Fateh
3219 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55103

Rep. Gene Pelowski
491 State Office Building
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chairs Fateh and Pelowski and Higher Education Conference Committee Members,

Hennepin Healthcare is writing to ask that you include the language in the House Higher Education Omnibus bill that provides \$270,000 in funding per year for the Addiction Medicine Fellowship program (S.F. 1269/H.F. 1339). We are grateful Chair Fateh authored this legislation in the Senate and that it was included as a priority in the House bill. This is the only Addiction Medicine Fellowship in Minnesota and is a partnership between the addiction medicine clinic at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) and the University of Minnesota Department of Psychiatry with rotations at the Minneapolis VA medical center and Meridian Behavioral Health Care in Owatonna.

This fellowship needs this critical funding to ensure we can continue to train physicians in the specialty of addiction medicine. Substance use disorder continues to be pervasive throughout Minnesota and requires continuing, comprehensive drug overdose prevention and response efforts. Funding our fellowship will train physicians to become experts in the prevention, clinical evaluation, treatment, and ongoing care of those with addiction. Our recent fellows are running Project ECHOs, treating patients in critical populations and locations in rural and urban areas across the state, and becoming teachers themselves. A high percentage of these fellows, more than 90%, remain in our state.

Unhealthy substance use and addiction is the nation's largest preventable health problem, yet only about 10% of patients receive treatment for it. There are many reasons contributing to the lack of treatment for so many Americans including stigma, poor reimbursement despite parity laws, and the lack of qualified and specialty trained providers. Specifically, physicians need a better understanding of the prevalence of alcohol and drug dependence in a variety of populations. Routine screening questions should be incorporated into patient encounters, and physicians should be able to identify environments that may pose a risk for the development of addiction. Physicians need training and practice in referring patients to treatment teams, monitoring patients in recovery, and providing interventions that will eliminate or reduce substance abuse before it becomes an addiction.

It has been very difficult for us to continually piece together funding to train physicians who are helping battle the disease of addiction throughout our state.

Please support the House Higher Education Omnibus language prioritizing funding for the Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program. Please reach out Susie Emmert at susie.emmert@hmed.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gavin Bart, MD, PhD
Chief of Addiction Medicine
Hennepin Healthcare

Dr. Charles Reznikoff, MD, FACP, FASAM
Addiction Medicine Clinic
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