

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Tim Kaine
United States Senate
231 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD
United States Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
United States Senate
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Todd Young
United States Senate
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Kaine, Reed, Cassidy, and Young:

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders thanks you for introducing the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* (S.610). This legislation will reduce and prevent suicide and mental and behavioral health conditions among health care professionals, sometimes referred to as “burn out.”

Health care professionals have long experienced high levels of stress and burnout, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues. Dr. Lorna Breen, for whom the legislation is named, was a physician who supervised an emergency department during the pandemic, and tragically died by suicide. We must prioritize the mental health of our frontline medical professionals who are caring for some of our most vulnerable patients, and encourage help seeking behaviors for mental health concerns and substance use disorders by reducing stigma around seeking help.

While suicide is the 10th leading cause of death overall in the United States, certain professionals, such as physicians, experience higher rates of suicide. Physicians die by suicide at nearly double the rate of the general population. These rates call attention to the need for changes within the culture of health professions and policies that will encourage rather than discourage help seeking. Therefore, there is a great need for this legislation, which:

- Establishes grants for training health care professionals in evidence-informed strategies to reduce and prevent suicide, burnout, mental health conditions and substance use disorders, and improve health care professionals’ well-being and job satisfaction.
- Identifies and disseminates evidence-informed best practices for reducing and preventing suicide and burnout among health care professionals, training health care professionals in appropriate strategies, and promoting their mental and behavioral health and job satisfaction.
- Establishes a national evidence-based education and awareness campaign targeting health care professionals to encourage them to seek support and treatment for mental and behavioral health concerns.
- Establishes grants for employee education, peer-support programming, and mental and behavioral health treatment, and will be prioritized to providers in current or former COVID-19 hotspots.

- Establishes a comprehensive study (with recommendations) on health care professional mental and behavioral health and burnout, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on such professionals' health.

There is a great need to ensure that our health care professionals have the resources to support their mental health, prevent suicide, and mitigate burn out, which has become more apparent considering the COVID-19 pandemic. The MHLG thanks you for introducing this important legislation that will help to reduce suicide rates and save lives.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association of Nurse Anesthetists

American Association of Suicidology

American Association on Health and Disability

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Counseling Association

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Mental Health Counselors Association

American Nurses Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychiatric Nurses Association (APNA)

American Psychological Association

American Society of Addiction Medicine

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Centerstone

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Children's Hospital Association

Clinical Social Work Association

Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition

Education Development Center

EMDR International Association

Emergency Nurses Association

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

Inseparable

International OCD Foundation

The Jewish Federations of North America

The Kennedy Forum
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Eating Disorders Association
National League for Nursing
Postpartum Support International (PSI)
Psychotherapy Action Network Advocacy
RI International, Inc.
Sandy Hook Promise
Schizophrenia And Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA)
SMART Recovery
The JED Foundation
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project
Well Being Trust
2020 Mom