

GNYHA POSITION PAPER

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THE OPIOID WORKFORCE ACT OF 2019

The Opioid Workforce Act of 2019 (S. 2892/H.R. 3414) addresses the nation's opioid epidemic by funding 1,000 additional residency positions in hospitals that have or are in the process of establishing approved residency programs in addiction medicine, addiction psychiatry, or pain management.

The bill is being lead in the House by Representatives Brad Schneider (D-IL), Susan Brooks (R-IN), Elise Stefanik (R-NY), and Ann Kuster (D-NH), and in the Senate by Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME). The legislation has already passed the House Ways and Means Committee.

Funding these new residency positions would significantly strengthen the health care workforce that serves on the front lines of the opioid epidemic.

The Association of American Medical Colleges projects that by 2032, the demand for physicians in both primary and specialty care will outpace supply by up to 121,900 physicians, primarily as a result of an aging, growing population with increasing health care needs. Though medical schools have expanded their class sizes to address shortages, residency positions for graduates to complete their training have not grown at the same pace, largely due to a two decade cap on Medicare support for physician training.

Every American in need of substance abuse treatment should have access to it. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, approximately 21 million people needed substance use treatment in 2016, but only 3.8 million received any treatment. There are many reasons for that gap, but existing and looming physician shortages worsen potential access issues.

In addition to the Opioid Workforce Act of 2019, GNYHA supports the bipartisan Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2019 (S. 348/H.R. 1763), which would increase the number of Medicare reimbursed residency slots by 15,000 over five years, allowing teaching hospitals to expand their residency programs. These bills prioritize additional support to specialties experiencing shortages, helping teaching hospitals to meet local and national workforce needs, including the wide range of disciplines needed to address the opioid epidemic.

GNYHA Position: GNYHA strongly supports the Opioid Workforce Act of 2019 and urges Congress to pass it.



GNYHA is a dynamic, constantly evolving center for health care advocacy and expertise, but our core mission—helping hospitals deliver the finest patient care in the most cost-effective way—never changes.