

February 25, 2022



Sen. Mark Koran
3101 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave West
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Sen. Koran:

As the Chief of Addiction Medicine at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC), I am writing to thank you for authoring Senate File 3424 which would financially support Minnesota's only addiction medicine fellowship. **This funding request would train 15 physicians in the specialty of addiction medicine over 5 years at the fellowship housed between the University of Minnesota Department of Psychiatry and HCMC's addiction medicine department.**

There are 21.2 million Americans that have a substance use disorder. In 2018, just 11% of those patients received the treatment they needed. And one in five people wrestling with an addiction say they do not know where to turn for help. Nationwide there are only an estimated 3,000 physicians specially trained to treat them according to the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). Our addiction fellowship was started in 1982 and has trained nearly 100 physicians on evidenced-based therapies to treat Minnesotans suffering from substance abuse disorder. We are the only addiction fellowship in Minnesota at a time when the need for highly trained professionals is growing.

While overdose deaths were already increasing in the months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest numbers suggest the isolation and stress of the pandemic led to a high acceleration of overdose deaths. Data from the CDC indicates that there were an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States between April 2020 and April 2021, an increase of nearly 30% from the year before. Those numbers mimic what we have seen in Minnesota.

The opioid epidemic continues to be pervasive 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 ECHO's, treating patients in critical populations and locations around the state and becoming teachers themselves.

I thank you again for championing our program. It will be a good use of state dollars and will save lives in Minnesota. If you have any questions, you can contact HCMC's contract lobbyist, Tara Erickson, at Tara@TGEconsultingmn.com. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dr. Gavin Bart, MD, PhD
Chief of Addiction Medicine
HCMC