



Minnesota Psychiatric Society

Improving Minnesota's mental health care through education, advocacy, and sound psychiatric practice, and achieving health equity.

March 15, 2022

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

Dear Representative Koran,

I am the President of the Minnesota Psychiatric Society (MPS). On behalf of the Minnesota Psychiatric Society, I am writing to support the Senate File 3424 which will provide funding for the Minnesota Addiction Medicine Fellowship.

MPS represents over 450 psychiatrists practicing in communities throughout the state, in health systems, academic centers, the prisons and often with underserved populations. The mission of MPS is to improve Minnesota's mental health care, including addiction, through education, advocacy, and sound psychiatric practice. There are too few physicians, either psychiatrists or primary care providers, to fill the need in the state of Minnesota. MPS supports the continuation and expansion of the Addiction Medicine fellowship, which trains physicians of all specialties in the care and treatment of persons with addiction and other mental health disorders. This fellowship is the only addiction medicine program in Minnesota.

The impact of covid has been profound on the mental health and addiction in our communities. Rates of alcohol use, opioid use, opioid deaths, and methamphetamine use and deaths has increased dramatically in the past year. The Minnesota Department of Health noted a rise of drug overdoses in of 30% in the first half of 2020 as compared to 2019 and an increase of 70% in 2020 in the same month as 2019. The opioid epidemic, covid epidemic, and recent sharp rise in methamphetamine and cocaine use highlight the critical nature of having a work force to treat these problems. Because of a limited number of trained addiction medicine physicians, only 11% of persons with addiction receive treatment.

I am acutely aware of the impact of substances on the health and development of young persons; an estimated 90% of addiction begins in adolescence or in young adulthood. Addiction fellows train in prevention and early intervention, which is key to making an impact in the lives of youth. Other populations such as the criminal justice, persons of color, and other underserved groups have been disproportionately affected by substance use.

I have seen the impact of addiction on not just patients with devastating addiction but also on our health system, with overdose deaths, and strain on limited resources.

Consistent funding has not been available to train these physicians, limiting the number of trainees. The requested funds in this bill will create stipend and program support to better serve the citizens of Minnesota with addiction, often complicated by mental health conditions.

Thank you for your support and for our state and the Minnesotans in need of treatment for addiction.

Thank you,

Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Chinmoy Gulrajani in black ink, with a horizontal line underneath.

Chinmoy Gulrajani, MD, DFAPA
MPS President

Handwritten signature of Michael Trangle in black ink.

Michael Trangle, MD, DLFAPA
MPS Legislative Chair