



PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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PAEAonline.org • 703-548-5538

January 21, 2020

The Honorable Andy Kim
1516 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mikie Sherrill
1208 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kim and Sherrill:

On behalf of the Physician Assistant Education Association, we are writing to commend your leadership and express our strong support for H.R. 5631, the Solutions Not Stigmas Act. PAEA represents the 250 accredited PA education programs throughout the United States and is committed to ensuring that the more than 9,000 graduates from our member programs each year receive the training necessary to provide high-quality care to patients suffering from substance use disorders (SUD). We believe that H.R. 5631 would significantly address current barriers in health professions education to the preparation of a behavioral health workforce that is fully equipped to meet the needs of SUD patients. As such, we are pleased to endorse this legislation.

One of the most pressing challenges faced by PA programs — and health professions education broadly — is the current shortage of clinical training sites, particularly in primary care and mental and behavioral health settings in which patients suffering from SUD most often receive care. In recognition of this challenge and of the importance of exposing students to SUD patients as a means of reducing stigma, H.R. 5631 would allow PA programs to utilize grant funding to support clinical rotations in these settings. This provision would be invaluable for reducing stigma toward patients with SUD, increasing the likelihood that graduates will choose to practice in primary care or behavioral health, as well as addressing the barriers that PA programs face in securing clinical training sites.

Furthermore, we applaud the bill's support of interprofessional, team-based training through its prioritization of grant applications that include partnerships between PA programs, nursing programs, medical schools, and other health professions programs. Addressing provider shortages in behavioral

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health requires adequate investments in the nation's health workforce across professions, and H.R. 5631 appropriately recognizes this imperative.

We look forward to the opportunity to work with you to promote the development of a high-quality primary care and behavioral health workforce through the advancement of H.R. 5631. Should you have any questions, please contact Director of Government Relations Tyler Smith at tsmith@PAEAonline.org or at (703) 667-4356.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Howard Straker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "S" at the end.

Howard Straker, EdD, MPH, PA-C
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara F. Fletcher". The signature is cursive and elegant, with a large, looping "S" at the beginning.

Sara Fletcher, PhD
Interim Chief Executive Officer