



May 21, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chair
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor & Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I would like to express our strong support for the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act, S. 3679. This bill would reauthorize essential programs to prevent and reduce incidences of suicide, mental health conditions, substance use disorders, and long-term stress, which is commonly referred to as “burnout” by the physician workforce. We greatly appreciate your recognition of the continued need to strengthen services that address the mental health needs of our nation’s physicians and to fight the stigma surrounding seeking necessary treatment and support. Thank you for convening a full-committee legislative markup on May 22nd which includes consideration of this important legislation. ACP requests that this letter be inserted into the official hearing record.

ACP is the largest medical specialty organization and the second largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 161,000 internal medicine physicians, related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge, clinical expertise, and compassion to the preventive, diagnostic, and therapeutic care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

Since the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act became law in 2022, access to mental and behavioral health support and treatment has improved for physicians across the country. The College strongly supports S. 3679, which would build on the progress the law has made by further strengthening critical programs to prevent burnout and improve access to resources for mental and behavioral health services – key factors to help address the current physician workforce shortage. In a 2021 [physician survey](#) conducted by the American Medical Association, almost 63 percent of physicians reported symptoms of burnout. This number is up from 38 percent in 2020. America’s physicians are at a critical breaking point that must be urgently addressed. The 2024 Medscape Physician Burnout & Depression Report showed that

[53 percent](#) of physicians who reported feeling burned out and/or depressed have not and will not seek professional help. Many physicians reported barriers such as stigma and the professional risks associated with disclosing their treatment activities to the medical board as factors for not seeking help. The avoidance of treatment is greatly alarming given that it could lead to worsening depression and even suicide. In fact, physicians in the United States face higher incidents of suicide than almost any other profession.

The College endorses this legislation, which would ensure that physicians across the country will continue to have access to education and training on effective strategies to prevent stress and burnout before the need becomes dire. This reauthorization bill would prioritize grant funding for communities with a shortage of health care workers, rural communities, and those experiencing burnout due to administrative burdens. Further, the bill would reauthorize and expand the scope of a national education and awareness campaign that would provide hospital and health system leaders with evidence-based solutions to reduce health care worker burnout.

ACP strongly supports Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act, S. 3679. We commend you for your continued bipartisan leadership in bringing this important legislation before the HELP Committee. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jared Frost, Manager, Legislative Affairs at jfrost@acponline.org or at 202-261-4526.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Issac Opole". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "I" and "O".

Issac Opole, MBChB, PhD, MACP
President