

May 1, 2019

The Honorable Brad Schneider
U.S. House of Representatives
1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schneider:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) thanks you for your continued leadership in promoting access to quality care in communities across the nation. We are pleased to support your legislation, H.R. 3414, the Opioid Workforce Act of 2019, which would help reduce the national shortage of opioid treatment providers by increasing the number of resident physician slots in hospitals with programs focused on substance use disorder (SUD) treatment.

As the nation continues to struggle with the devastating public health crisis stemming from the opioid epidemic, we recognize that the shortage of SUD treatment providers has led to lengthy waiting periods for treatment and increased mortality from opioid misuse and addiction. A recent report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine highlighted the dearth of clinicians with specialized training in Medication-assisted Treatment, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has estimated that only 10 percent of the 22 million Americans with a SUD receive treatment. The AHA last year endorsed the SUPPORT Act, P.L. 115-271, multifaceted legislation to combat the opioid crisis and prevent further addiction; however, Congress did not include in that law provisions to increase the number of physicians who specialize in SUD treatment.

Your legislation would address existing shortages by adding 1,000 Medicare-funded training positions in approved residency programs in addiction medicine, addiction psychiatry or pain management. These new slots would constitute a major step toward increasing access to SUD treatment for communities in need. We look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this important legislation.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Priscilla A. Ross, senior associate director of federal relations, at pross@aha.org or (202) 626-2677.

Sincerely,

/s/

Thomas P. Nickels
Executive Vice President

