

December 4, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the nearly 60 undersigned organizations and the millions of dedicated physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and health care professionals across the country who have benefited from the vital support offered through the initial authorization of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act of 2022 (“Lorna Breen Act” or “Act”), we strongly urge you to swiftly consider and pass the bipartisan Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act (H.R. 7153/S. 3679). Led by Representatives Susan Wild (D-PA), Buddy Carter (R-GA), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), and Jen Kiggans (R-VA), and Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Todd Young (R-IN), both the House and Senate versions of this important reauthorization effort were marked-up and reported out of committee earlier this spring with overwhelming bipartisan support. We ask for your leadership in ensuring this much-needed program is reauthorized prior to the close of the 118th Congress, either as a stand-alone measure or as part of any legislative package.

The Lorna Breen Act was originally enacted on March 18, 2022, and is the first and only federal law dedicated to preventing suicide and reducing occupational burnout, mental health conditions, and stress for health care professionals. It is named in honor of the life, memory, and legacy of Dr. Lorna Breen, an emergency physician who died by suicide on April 26, 2020. Dr. Breen was a sister, a daughter, a friend, a colleague, and a caregiver who was deeply dedicated to her patients. The law that carries her name was a critical first step in acknowledging and addressing the pervasive stigma and challenges – such as fear of loss of licensure or credentialing – that often prevent health care professionals from seeking the mental health services they need, causing them to suffer in silence.

Because of the Lorna Breen Act, lives have been saved and livelihoods have been protected. Access to mental and behavioral health support and treatment has improved and more health care employers are able to engage with their health care professional workforce on these issues, provide greater resources, and accelerate promising solutions. Thanks to continued advocacy work, several state licensure boards, hospitals, and health systems have also started to implement overdue changes in licensing and credentialing processes that have unintentionally contributed to the stigma associated with seeking mental health care.

But there is still much work to be done. The Lorna Breen Act has made this progress possible, but the need for the law is as great as ever. Health care professionals still face higher and increasing rates of mental health and behavioral health conditions, occupational burnout, and suicide than other professions. These factors are only worsening existing provider shortages and negatively affecting patient care, as experienced health care professionals leave the workforce in greater numbers and recruitment and retention of future generations becomes more and more difficult. We must continue to prioritize the health and well-being of those who care for us, ensuring an environment where each and every health care professional always has access to the necessary mental health care services they need and deserve, without fear of loss of licensure, loss of income, or threat of other meaningful career setbacks associated with the stigma of getting the help they need.

The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act will help ensure that hospitals, health systems, and other health care organizations can continue, expand, and build on the successes seen with numerous initiatives funded by the Act. Moreover, the reauthorization measure importantly expands grants and contracts eligibility to include entities that have “a focus on the reduction of administrative burden on health care workers.” This will enable health care organizations to address system-level risk factors that lead to occupational burnout, contribute to mental health conditions, and cause intensive stress and strain. Excessive administrative burden and workflow inefficiencies overload already stretched-thin health care professionals and such pressures can compromise patient care and interfere with the patient-clinician relationship. When health care professionals have the care they need and deserve they are able to continue to provide high quality care to the individuals, families, and communities they serve.

Once again, we respectfully ask for your leadership to ensure the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act is reauthorized before the end of the year. We are grateful for your continued commitment to the physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and all health care professionals who continue to serve our communities every day. When we support the individuals who comprise our nation’s health care workforce, we ensure that patients have optimal care and that our health care system can thrive. Please know we stand ready to work with you and your colleagues to help secure enactment of the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Reauthorization Act before the end of the session.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Neurology
American Academy of Nursing
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
American Association of Critical-Care Nurses
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons
American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons
American College of Cardiology
American College of Emergency Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American College of Physicians
American College of Radiology

American College of Rheumatology
American College of Surgeons
American Dental Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Medical Association
American Nurses Association
American Osteopathic Association
American Physical Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association Services
American Society for Radiation Oncology
American Society of Anesthesiologists
American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery
American Society of Health-System Pharmacists
American Society of Transplant Surgeons
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
American Urological Association
American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine
AMGA
Association for Clinical Oncology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Caregiver Action Network
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Corporate Counseling Associates
Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation
Emergency Nurses Association
FIGS
Intealth
Johnson & Johnson
Moral Injury of Healthcare
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Consumers League
National Hispanic Health Foundation
National Hispanic Medical Association
National League for Nursing
National Minority Quality Forum
PBI Education
Renal Physicians Association
Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions
Society for Vascular Surgery
Society of Gynecologic Oncology
Sutter Health
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

cc: The Honorable John Thune, Senate Republican Whip
The Honorable Steve Scalise, House Majority Leader
The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
The Honorable Bill Cassidy, MD, Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee