

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, and Education
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Blunt

Thank you for your continued support of the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). As the members of the MFP Coalition, we are writing to urge robust and sustainable funding for the MFP as part of a year-end fiscal year (FY) 2023 appropriations package. For almost 50 years, this program has successfully been encouraging more individuals to join the behavioral health workforce and helping to improve behavioral health outcomes for communities of color. We thank you for your continued support of the program and **urge you to provide the House Committee level of \$25 million for the Minority Fellowship Program.**

By 2025, people of color are projected to account for 40 percent of the U.S. population, yet they account for less than 20 percent of America's behavioral health workforce. Furthermore, there are persistent health disparities impacting racial and ethnic populations. Communities of color are less likely to receive diagnosis and treatment for their mental illness, have less access to and availability of mental health services and often receive a poorer quality of mental health care. They face many challenges when seeking care including racism, bias and discrimination in treatment, stigma, language barriers, and an overall lack of availability of services.

Culturally competent behavioral health services are necessary to meet demand and behavioral health challenges facing communities across the United States. To meet this need, the MFP has been increasing the number of minority behavioral health professionals providing culturally competent mental health and substance use disorders services to underserved populations. The MFP provides support to behavioral health professionals in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work, nursing, marriage and family therapy, counseling, and addictions.

In 2016, the bipartisan *21st Century Cures Act* (P.L. 114-146) authorized the MFP for the first time in the program's history. Since that authorization, the program has been utilized to prepare a diverse workforce to address the behavioral health and substance use disorder needs of communities of color in our nation. To that end, we urge you to provide the House Committee level of \$25 million in FY 2023, so that we can increase the only federal program that supports culturally competent mental health and substance use disorders professionals.

We are grateful for your support for the Minority Fellowship Program and hope you can accommodate our request for FY 2023.

Sincerely,

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Council on Social Work Education
NAADAC: The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Board for Certified Counselors and Affiliates