



May 10, 2022

Sen. David Tomassoni	Rep. Connie Bernardy
Sen. Jason Rarick	Rep. Shelly Christensen
Sen. John Jasinski	Rep. Ginny Klevorn
Sen. Karin Housley	Rep. Heather Keeler
Sen. Greg Clausen	Rep. Marion O'Neill

Dear Higher Education conference committee members:

Hennepin Healthcare is writing to request your support for HF3552/SF3424 which would provide needed funding for the only addiction medicine fellowship in Minnesota. This fellowship is a partnership between the addiction medicine clinic at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) and the University of Minnesota Department of Psychiatry with rotations also at the Minneapolis VA medical center and Meridian Behavioral Health Care in Owatonna.

Unhealthy substance use and addiction is the nation's largest preventable health problem, yet only about 10% of patients receive treatment for it. There are many reasons contributing to the lack of treatment for so many Americans including stigma, poor reimbursement despite parity laws, and the lack of qualified and specialty trained providers. Specifically, physicians need a better understanding of the prevalence of alcohol and drug dependence in a variety of populations, along with increased awareness of the economic impact of addictive illnesses on our society. Routine screening questions should be incorporated into patient encounters, and physicians should be able to identify environments that may pose a risk for the development of addiction. Physicians need training and practice in referring patients to treatment teams, monitoring patients in recovery, and providing interventions that will eliminate or reduce substance abuse before it becomes addiction.

**This funding request would train 15 physicians in the specialty of addiction medicine over 5 years.** We are the only addiction fellowship in Minnesota at a time when the need for highly trained professionals is growing. Substance use disorder continues to be pervasive and requires continuing, comprehensive drug overdose prevention and response efforts. Funding our fellowship will train physicians to become experts in the prevention, clinical evaluation, treatment, and ongoing care of those with addiction. Our recent fellows are running Project ECHO's, treating patients in critical populations and locations around the state and becoming teachers themselves.

Stemming from the opioid epidemic, overdoses continue to increase and the latest numbers suggest the isolation and stress of the pandemic led to a high acceleration of overdose deaths. Data from the CDC indicates that there were an estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths in the United States between April 2020 and April 2021, an increase of nearly 30% from the year before. Those numbers mimic what we have seen in Minnesota.

Please support this critical funding as it will be a good use of state dollars and will save lives in Minnesota. If you have any questions, you can contact HCMC's contract lobbyist, Tara Erickson, at [Tara@TGEconsultingmn.com](mailto:Tara@TGEconsultingmn.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Gavin Bart, MD, PhD  
Chief of Addiction Medicine  
HCMC