

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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March 2, 2021

Rep. Erin Koegel  
445 State Office Building  
100 Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program Funding, House File 1283

Dear Rep. Koegel,

I am writing to strongly and enthusiastically support the request from HCMC for financial support of the Minnesota Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program. I am the Program Director for the fellowship and have worked closely with HCMC to train physicians, especially from primary care, in the treatment of patients with addiction. The focus of the Addiction Medicine Fellowship Program is to expand the number of fellows, increase the workforce especially in underserved and community-based settings and train fellows to be leaders in the community. While the Addiction Medicine Fellowship has trained physicians for over 30 years who have entered practice sites around Minnesota, consistent funding has not been available, limiting the number of trainees. The requested funds will allow expansion into much needed addiction care in underserved community sites by increasing the flexibility of the program with creating salary support.

The fellowship has achieved many successes through the years. It was one of the first ten model programs accredited by the American Board of Addiction Medicine and received a federal grant for 2 years to train fellows and initiate the process of formal accreditation through the American Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). We received such status in 2018. Our fellows practice and work in diverse settings: academic, private practice, community underserved areas, with native populations, and primary care. The influence of the graduates reaches far: one of the fellows became President of the national organization, American Society of Addiction Medicine and has been a tireless advocate for patients with addiction and a policy maker. Project ECHO is such an example of the widespread influence our fellows have, in expanding access to all Minnesota clinicians on addiction treatment.

Of the more recent graduates, three are in community settings, two at HCMC, three at University or VAMC, and two are working with Native American populations. We have expanded the program to three and with funding, can continue to train more to better serve the population of Minnesota. All fellows are trained in evidence-based treatments. In particular, they are trained in the pharmacotherapies for addiction and most notably, buprenorphine, which is highly effective in reducing mortality from opioid use disorder.

The University's Department of Psychiatry provides resources such as a program coordinator, an education manager and myself as program director to aid in the administration of the program. I am an Addiction Psychiatrist and Addiction Medicine faculty and received my fellowship training through this program. I have been the Program Director for over 20 years and have seen the program struggle because of funding constraints and also seen the successes and influences of the graduating fellows.

We request your support to fund and sustain the fellowship, a key resource for the citizens of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Sheila Specker, MD.

Sheila Specker, MD  
Associate Professor  
Addiction Psychiatrist  
Program Director, Minnesota Addiction Medicine Fellowship