



## Statement for the Record

### Executive Session of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension

May 25, 2021

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) and 42 undersigned state and specialty osteopathic associations, which collectively represent more than 151,000 osteopathic physicians and osteopathic medical students, enthusiastically support the *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act*, S. 610, and encourages member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pension (HELP) to favorably vote this bipartisan legislation out of the committee for consideration by the full Senate.

Physicians in the United States have the highest rate of suicide among all professions, and COVID-19 is exacerbating problems that have long plagued the medical profession. The suicide of Dr. Lorna Breen highlights the many additional challenges physicians are confronting during this pandemic, which include the trauma of losing both patients and colleagues, operating in conditions previously considered unfathomable, and managing the stress of potentially transmitting a deadly virus to family and friends.

Despite this, the physicians who care for our nation face hurdles accessing the care they need to sustain their own mental health. The *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* provides needed support for the many osteopathic and allopathic physicians, medical students, and other health care professionals on the front lines of care during this crisis. This legislation would authorize new training programs for health professionals, evidence-based awareness and educational campaigns, and grants for peer support and treatment programs that were appropriated in the *American Rescue Plan Act*.

The *Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act* would also commission a federal review of the mental and behavioral effects of COVID-19 on the healthcare workforce, as well as barriers health care professionals have in seeking appropriate care. The stigma surrounding mental illness is a well-known barrier to seeking care among the general population, but it can have an even stronger impact among health care professionals. For most physicians and other clinicians, seeking treatment for mental health sparks legitimate fear of resultant loss of licensure, loss of income, or other meaningful career setbacks because of ongoing stigma. Such fears have deterred them from accessing necessary mental health care, leaving many to suffer in silence, or worse.

If we do not act now in support of health care professionals, other physicians will be lost to burnout, substance abuse, and other mental health disorders. We firmly support this bipartisan legislation and encourage members of the committee to favorably report the legislation out of the HELP Committee.

Sincerely,

American Osteopathic Association  
Alaska Osteopathic Medical Association  
American Academy of Osteopathy  
American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians  
American College of Osteopathic Internists  
American College of Osteopathic Neurologists and Psychiatrists  
American College of Osteopathic Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics  
American Osteopathic Academy of Sports Medicine  
American Osteopathic College of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation  
American Osteopathic College of Radiology  
American Osteopathic Society of Rheumatic Diseases  
Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association  
Association of Military Osteopathic Physicians & Surgeons  
Colorado Society of Osteopathic Medicine  
Georgia Osteopathic Medical Association  
Idaho Osteopathic Physicians Association  
Illinois Osteopathic Medical Society  
Indiana Osteopathic Association  
Iowa Osteopathic Medical Association  
Kansas Association of Osteopathic Medicine  
Kentucky Osteopathic Medical Association  
Louisiana Osteopathic Medical Association  
Maine Osteopathic Association  
Maryland Association of Osteopathic Physicians  
Massachusetts Osteopathic Society  
Michigan Osteopathic Association  
Minnesota Osteopathic Medical Society  
Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons  
New Hampshire Osteopathic Association  
New Jersey Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons  
New York State Osteopathic Medical Society  
North Carolina Osteopathic Medical Association  
Ohio Osteopathic Association  
Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of California  
Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons of Oregon  
Pennsylvania Osteopathic Medical Association  
South Carolina Osteopathic Medical Society  
Tennessee Osteopathic Medical Association  
Texas Osteopathic Medical Association  
Virginia Osteopathic Medical Association  
Washington Osteopathic Medical Association  
West Virginia Osteopathic Medical Association  
Wisconsin Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons