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November 13, 2026

The Honorable Rick Larsen
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Larsen:

On behalf of the AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges),[1] I write in support of your bill, the Closing the Substance Use Care Gap Act, to reauthorize and expand the Harm Reduction Grant Program administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Academic health systems largely serve on the front lines of the country's safety net and invest in a wide scope of mental and behavioral health services, including treatment and recovery support for substance use disorders (SUD). Our members have seen firsthand the devastating impacts of the opioid epidemic and other SUDs on patients, families, and communities. While the nation has made strides in addressing these challenges, more robust efforts are necessary to meet the demand for care. Evidence-based harm reduction strategies, such as overdose prevention programs, play an important role in preventing deaths, reducing spread of infectious diseases, and connecting people to treatment.

While no single intervention on its own will fully resolve the challenges that individuals with substance use disorders face in accessing treatment, your bill would take an important step forward to continue and enhance SAMHSA's support for harm reduction work across the country. Thank you for your efforts, and we look forward to working with you as the legislation advances.

Sincerely,

Danielle P. Turnipseed

Danielle Turnipseed, JD, MHSA, MPP
AAMC Chief Public Policy Officer

cc: David J. Skorton, MD, AAMC President and CEO

[1] Established in 1876, the AAMC is a nonprofit association dedicated to improving the health of people everywhere through medical education, clinical care, biomedical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 163 U.S. medical schools accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education; 11 Canadian medical schools accredited by the Committee on Accreditation of Canadian Medical Schools; more than 400 academic health systems and teaching hospitals; and more than 70 academic societies. The AAMC also collaborates with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and VA medical centers through their academic affiliations with AAMC-member institutions. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves America's medical schools, academic health systems and teaching hospitals, and the millions of individuals across academic medicine, including more than 220,000 full-time faculty members, 100,000 medical students, 167,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences. Through the Alliance of Academic Health Centers International, AAMC membership reaches more than 60 international academic health centers throughout five regional offices across the globe.