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July 18, 2019

The Honorable Maggie Hassan
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: The Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act (S.2074)

Dear Senators Hassan and Murkowski:

The Society of General Internal Medicine (SGIM) represents approximately 3,500 general internists whose careers focus on improving the health of adults through clinical care, medical education, and research. We write in strong support of the "Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act of 2019" (S.2074).

More than 40,000 Americans died of an opioid overdose in 2018. In response to this national crisis, this bipartisan legislation would improve patients' access to an effective treatment for opioid addiction. The MAT Act would end a well-intentioned, though outdated, system that requires healthcare providers to obtain additional certification in order to prescribe buprenorphine, an evidence-based medication treatment for opioid addiction that has been shown to decrease risk of death. Nearly 20 years after this certification process was created by Congress, fewer than 5% of practicing physicians in the US have this additional certification, dramatically restricting access to an effective treatment. Many regions (more than 40% of US counties) are "buprenorphine deserts," with no providers certified to prescribe buprenorphine.

The Society of General Internal Medicine is the professional home to national leaders in primary care, hospital medicine, medical education and health policy. As general internists, our members have seen how buprenorphine can help patients overcome opioid use disorder. We have also seen how the current system restricts patients' access to this treatment in general medical settings such as primary care and in the hospital. As educators training the next generation of physicians, our members have seen how this outdated law discourages future physicians from preparing to treat opioid use disorder and other substance use disorders, perpetuating stigma and inadequate access to evidence-based care.

We understand that the opioid crisis is an urgent and complex problem afflicting our patients and their communities. SGIM believes that the federal response to this crisis must meet the scale of this challenge, addressing the root causes and social determinants of opioid addiction to broadly improve access to high-quality, evidence-based care. The Mainstreaming Addiction



Treatment Act targets a key barrier. SGIM appreciates your leadership on this issue and encourages Congress to pass this important bipartisan measure.

If you require additional information, please contact Erika Miller at emiller@dc-crd.com or (202) 484-1100.

Sincerely,

Eric B. Bass, MD, MPH, FACP
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