

29 Mar AAHIVM Applauds the Reintroduction of the HELP Act

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WASHINGTON, DC: The American Academy of HIV Medicine strongly supports the reintroduction of the HIV Epidemic Loan-Repayment Program (HELP) Act. The bill, which would bring up to \$250,000 in loan repayment over five years to physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists and dentists for providing HIV care and treatment-related services, is needed to address the shortage of clinicians and allied health professionals in the HIV field as we seek to end the epidemic.

According to the Academy, the nation faces severe workforce capacity challenges to effectively treat people with HIV/AIDS. The demand for HIV and primary health care services, in particular, continues to increase as treating people with HIV becomes more complicated and new cases arise. To receive assistance under the bill, health professionals must be practicing in an area with a recognized provider shortage or within a Ryan White funded clinical site.

“This bill is particularly important in a moment when the Administration has committed to ending the HIV epidemic by 2025,” says Academy Executive Director Bruce Packett.

“Although we have had great success in beginning to lower the rate of new infections, it’s important to remember that the population of people with HIV are growing even as they are living longer, healthier lives. There continues to be an important need for new medical professionals to enter the field, especially since many of the 1980s medical first responders to the epidemic are retiring. Unlike other specialty areas, there have been few financial incentives to enter HIV care and this bill will help to address that.”

The Academy has been actively working for many years on bringing greater visibility to the provider shortage. Overall, 43 percent of Academy membership self-reported their intention to retire within 20 years or less, with 23 percent indicating they will retire in 10

patients with HIV. Two out of every five respondents indicated that they had difficulties hiring HIV clinical staff (MD, PA, NP, RN, Advanced Practice RN, Pharmacists) in the past 12 months. If the nation is serious about Ending the Epidemic, we need to encourage medical providers to enter the field.

“The American Academy of HIV Medicine thanks Representatives Barbara Lee and Lisa Blunt Rochester for their deep commitment to ending the HIV epidemic and for reintroducing the bill,” stated Dr. Jonathan Appelbaum, the Academy’s Board Chair. “Their initiative will help ensure that everyone with HIV will receive the professional and effective care that they need.”

“We expect that as the Administration implements the National HIV/AIDS Plan and the Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan that there will be an increase of people with or at risk for HIV that must be linked or relinked to care and prevention. To meet this demand we must increase the physicians, nurses practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists and other medical professionals providing HIV care, treatment, and prevention,” stated Dr. Margaret Hoffman-Terry, the Academy’s Public Policy Committee Chair. “This bill has the incentives that will help retain and encourage more medical professionals, especially providers that demographically mirror the epidemic and understand the needs of their patients, to enter the field.”

Finally, The Academy remembers and appreciates the contributions of Representative John Lewis (D-GA), who passed away in 2020 and who initially introduced the bill in the last Congress. As a renowned civil rights leader, his willingness to fight the HIV epidemic helped to raise the importance of this issue for medical professionals throughout the United States. Representative Lewis is much missed and we appreciate the opportunity to continue his legacy.

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About the American Academy of HIV Medicine: The American Academy of HIV Medicine is the nation’s leading independent organization of healthcare professionals dedicated to providing excellence in HIV care and prevention. Our membership of practitioners and credentialed providers manage the health of the majority of people with and at risk for HIV in the United States. The Academy’s mission is to ensure healthcare professionals have the resources needed to provide prevention, treatment and care for those living with or at risk for HIV and related conditions to achieve optimal health.