



The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act

In March of 2021, the Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S. 610/H.R. 1667) was introduced in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. Dr. Lorna Breen was an emergency room doctor working in New York on the frontlines of the Covid-19 pandemic. Dr. Breen contracted Covid-19, recovered, and then went back to work but had trouble making it through her sometimes 18-hour shifts. She was treated for exhaustion and later committed suicide. This legislation, is named in honor of Dr. Breen, and the commitment to the medical profession she demonstrated while serving on the frontlines during this global pandemic.

This bipartisan, bicameral legislation will help reduce and prevent mental and behavioral health conditions, suicide, and burnout, as well as increase access to evidence-based treatment for physicians, medical students, and other health care professionals, especially those who continue to be overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This legislation was reported positively out of the Senate HELP Committee in May of 2021.

Specifically, this legislation would work to:

- Help establish grants for training health profession students, residents, or health care professionals to reduce and prevent suicide
- Identify and disseminate best practices for reducing and preventing suicide and burnout among health care professionals
- Establish a national education and awareness campaign to encourage health care workers to seek support and treatment
- Establish grants for employee education, peer-support programming, and mental and behavioral health treatment
- Commission a federal study into health care professional mental health and burnout, as well as barriers to seeking appropriate care

Why This Legislation Matters:

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.

The AAOS believes clinicians need to be able to freely seek mental health treatment and services without the fear of professional setbacks, so that their mental health care needs can be resolved, rather than hidden away and suffered through.

AAOS Recommends:

Support physician mental health by cosponsoring Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act (S. 610/H.R. 1667)