



**Association of
American Medical Colleges**
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July 23, 2021

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Underwood:

On behalf of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), I write to thank you for your bill, the Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act, which would authorize grants to entities, including medical schools, teaching hospitals, and other organizations, to establish or expand training for health professionals to identify risk of self-harm, promote lethal means safety, and prevent suicide. The AAMC is pleased to support this legislation.

The AAMC is a not-for-profit association dedicated to transforming health through medical education, health care, medical research, and community collaborations. Its members are all 155 accredited U.S. medical schools; more than 400 teaching hospitals and health systems, including 51 Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers; and more than 70 academic societies. Through these institutions and organizations, the AAMC leads and serves the leaders of America's medical schools and teaching hospitals and their more than 179,000 full-time faculty members, 92,000 medical students, 140,000 resident physicians, and 60,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in the biomedical sciences.

The increase in suicide deaths since 2007 in individuals aged 10-24 has been alarming, and suicide joins unintentional injuries and homicide as the leading causes of death for adolescents aged 15-19. Equipping health professionals to recognize warning signs of suicidal ideation and to counsel patients to promote safety is one critical tool in addressing this public health crisis. For example, studies have shown that hospital-level interventions to promote safe storage of firearms and medications are effective in changing storage practices in the homes of at-risk children and adolescents,¹ a key finding in preventing harm given the impulsive nature of most suicides.

Recognizing the opportunity to enhance curricular materials in this space, a group of 33 subject matter experts, including AAMC Medical Education Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships Dr. Lisa Howley, recently published the first national consensus guidelines on firearm injury prevention educational priorities for health professionals and health systems improvement guidelines, including content on lethal means screening.² Additionally, the AAMC

¹ Miller M, Salhi C, Barber C, et al. Changes in Firearm and Medication Storage Practices in Homes of Youths at Risk for Suicide: Results of the SAFETY Study, a Clustered, Emergency Department–Based, Multisite, Stepped-Wedge Trial. *Annals of Emergency Medicine*. Volume 76, Issue 2, 2020, Pages 194-205.

² Hoops, K, Fahimi, J, Khoeur, L, et al. Consensus-Driven Priorities for Firearm Injury Education Among Medical Professionals. *Academic Medicine*: July 6, 2021.

also has issued a call for submissions on integrated behavioral health to MedEdPORTAL (www.mededportal.org), a free, searchable web-based journal promoting the open exchange of peer-reviewed health education teaching and assessment resources. In particular, the call for submissions seeks teaching activities and assessment approaches to promote equity in the delivery of integrated behavioral health care, among other priorities.

Your bill would help provide resources to health professions schools and other entities to develop and integrate such evidence-based resources into ongoing programs. While the ability of any single educational intervention on its own to overcome pervasive societal and systemic challenges is limited, we believe that support for targeted, evidence-based programming will help facilitate the work underway at medical schools and teaching hospitals nationwide. Support for such efforts is an important component of any comprehensive strategy to avoid preventable injuries and deaths.

Thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to continuing to work with you as this important bill moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Fisher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Karen" and last name "Fisher" clearly distinguishable.

Karen Fisher, JD
AAMC Chief Public Policy Officer