

Presence, Progress, Momentum, Opportunity – NAACAC Looks to Build on Success in New Congress

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NAADAC’s commitment to elevating the voice and experience of addiction professionals helped shape critical legislation in the 115th Congress. In 2019, NAADAC will continue building on its work to expand prevention, treatment, and recovery services, forge new relationships with the new faces of the 116th Congress, and host another engaging Advocacy in Action Conference and Hill Day in Washington.

Last year, lawmakers worked together in bipartisan fashion to deliver a comprehensive response to the nation’s opioid crisis by passing the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act (Public Law No: 115-271). NAADAC played an important role in advocating for its passage and ensuring that key provisions were included in the final bill, including student loan forgiveness for the addiction workforce, partial repeal of the Medicaid IMD Exclusion, expansion of SUD telehealth services, grants to states to help support SUD workforce shortages, and much more.

With NAADAC’s help, the Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act, championed by Representatives Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Hal Rogers (R-KY), was adopted in the broader legislation. NAADAC endorsed the legislation in advance of the vote and rallied support for its passage in the House and Senate with action alerts to members and letters to Congress. The legislation marks a significant victory for NAADAC members and the next generation of addiction professionals.

The Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program will serve as a major incentive to students pursuing substance use disorder treatment professions. The legislation will provide up to \$250,000 in student loan repayment for those who work as substance use disorder treatment professionals in areas of need. To qualify, eligible health care professionals, such as addiction counselors, need to be employed in a full-time substance use disorder treatment job in a high-need area for up to six years.

In addition, after 11 years of advocating for the Human Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to include addiction professionals in its National Health Service Corps (NHSC) loan repayment program, NAADAC was excited for HRSA to announce the 2019 Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program (SUD Workforce LRP). This new program expands access to evidence-based SUD treatment in underserved, high-need communities by offering up to \$75,000 in loan forgiveness for a three-year full-time commitment at a NHSC-approved site or up to \$37,500 for a three-year half-time commitment.

During the debate regarding the text of the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, NAADAC also voiced concerns over provisions that could have carried significant unintended consequences for the privacy rights of individuals with substance use disorders. The Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act, one of the bills contained within the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act, would have permitted the disclosure of patient records without written consent, under certain conditions, and could have subjected individuals to discrimination if their information



was mishandled. NAADAC offered valuable contributions to a contentious and complicated debate. The provision was omitted from the final bill, representing another important win for NAADAC’s advocacy efforts.

In addition to its efforts to pass the SUPPORT for Patients Communities Act, NAADAC called on Congress to fund critical programs that support the addiction workforce. In collaboration with coalition partners, NAADAC successfully advocated for increased funding for the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services (SAMHSA)’s Minority Fellowship

Program, which awards funding to Master’s degree-level graduate students in addiction studies committed to working with underserved populations.

In the fall, NAADAC took to Capitol Hill for its annual Advocacy in Action Conference and Hill Day. NAADAC members and constituents in attendance heard from key Congressional staff and some of Washington’s most influential voices on addiction, treatment, and recovery services, including the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Jim Carroll. NAADAC also hosted a successful briefing at the U.S. Capitol Building’s Visitor Center where attendees heard from a number of engaging speakers before hitting the halls of Congress for their Hill Day. NAADAC is gearing up already for its 2019 Advocacy in Action Conference and Hill Day, so be sure to stay tuned for more information and hold April 10-11th on your calendars now.

NAADAC is poised to build on its 2018 accomplishments but needs your help. In 2019, NAADAC will look to help grow the Congressional Addiction, Treatment and Recovery Caucus, demonstrate to Congress the importance of national credentials and standards for the addiction workforce, and fight for expanded treatment and recovery services for individuals with substance use disorders. Join us as we fight to ensure individuals, families, and communities across this country get access to the treatment and recovery continuum of care they deserve. Please follow www.naadac.org/take-action for more ways to stay involved.



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