

# STRENGTHENING THE ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE ACT [S. 1453]

The Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act (S. 1453) would bolster the addiction workforce by extending student loan repayment opportunities to currently-eligible professionals working in addiction settings. Specifically, the bill adds addiction treatment facilities as eligible participating sites in the existing National Health Service Corps (NHSC) loan forgiveness program. NHSC provides loan forgiveness to more than 10,000 eligible health care professionals across the country in exchange for their service in underserved rural, urban and frontier communities, touching over 11 million American lives. Under current law, NHSC participants may serve in qualified primary care, dental or mental health clinics experiencing workforce shortages, but are ineligible for loan forgiveness if they work in addiction treatment settings. By expanding NHSC sites to include qualified addiction facilities, this legislation will improve access to desperately needed addiction services for millions of Americans.

## WHY DO WE NEED THE STRENGTHENING THE ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE ACT?

**There is a growing workforce crisis in the addictions field limiting patients' ability to receive care.** The Surgeon General's 2016 report, Facing Addiction in America, found that only 10.4 percent of Americans that met the diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder received any kind of addiction treatment in 2015. That compares to U.S. treatment rates as high as 80 percent for other chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension. Allowing NHSC-eligible providers who work in addiction treatment facilities to qualify for loan forgiveness would help increase the number of dedicated and well-trained providers in high-need communities, expanding access to care for individuals struggling with opioid addiction and other substance use disorders. Without a stronger addiction workforce, patients seeking recovery from addiction will continue to face denials for service and long wait lists.

### BOTTOM LINE

By expanding the National Health Service Corps, this bill will help addiction treatment providers attract quality staff and improve access to care

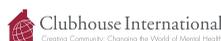
### REQUEST FOR SENATORS

Cosponsor the Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act (S. 1453)

### REQUEST FOR REPRESENTATIVES

Please cosponsor this legislation when it is introduced.

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**States urgently need a larger addiction treatment and recovery support workforce to address the opioid addiction crisis.** Across the nation, communities are confronting an opioid addiction crisis. However, an ongoing labor shortage among addiction professionals is slowing the response to the crisis. Social workers, nurses, psychologists, therapists and counselors are all critical to delivery of evidence-based opioid addiction treatment and recovery, yet existing federal policy disincentivizes them from working at addiction treatment facilities. With a greater supply of qualified professionals, providers would be able to staff more residential treatment beds and offer more community-based prevention, treatment and recovery support services.

**The bill would allow addiction facilities to offer potential employees the same incentives as mental health and primary care providers.** The NHSC program has been very successful helping qualified, community-based primary care and mental health clinics attract a well-trained workforce in medically underserved areas of the country by offering them loan forgiveness. Unfortunately, addiction treatment facilities have not had the same ability to offer loan forgiveness incentives to potential employees. If passed, this bill would offer an important recruitment tool for addiction organizations competing for limited staff in underserved areas.

## STRENGTHENING THE ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE ACT COSPONSORS

AS OF 9.18.17

### S. 1453

**AK:** Lisa Murkowski (R)  
*Lead Sponsor*

**IN:** Joe Donnelly (D)  
*Lead Sponsor*

**MN:** Amy Klobuchar (D)

No House version of the bill has yet been introduced.

**CBO Score:** The Congressional Budget Office has not yet scored this legislation.

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