March 19, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, 
Health and Human Services, and Education  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, 
Health and Human Services, and Education  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

Thank you for your continued support of the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). For almost 45 years, this program has successfully been encouraging more racial and ethnic minorities to join the behavioral health workforce and helping to improve behavioral health outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities make up more than 28 percent of the nation’s population, yet less than 20 percent of America’s behavioral health workforce consists of ethnic minorities. By 2025, minorities are projected to account for 40 percent of the U.S. population. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), minorities are less likely to receive diagnosis and treatment for their mental illness, have less access to and availability of mental health services and often receive a poorer quality of mental health care. Minorities can face several challenges when seeking care including racism, bias and discrimination in treatment, stigma, language barriers, and an overall lack of availability of services, as well as barriers to treatment and recovery.

Culturally competent behavioral health services are necessary to meet demand and behavioral health challenges facing communities across the United States, including the opioid epidemic. According to SAMHSA, significant behavioral health disparities persist in diverse communities across the United States. There are persistent health disparities between different racial and ethnic populations, and health equity remains a challenge with minorities receiving less mental health and addiction treatment and lower-quality care.

To meet this need, the MFP has been increasing the number of culturally competent behavioral health professionals providing mental health and substance use disorders services to underserved populations. The MFP provides support to behavioral health professionals in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work, nursing, marriage and family therapy, counseling and addictions.
The bipartisan 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-146) authorized $12,669,000 for this important program. To that end, we urge you to provide the authorized amount so that we can continue to support the only federal program that supports culturally competent mental health and substance use disorders professionals.

We are grateful for your support for the MFP and hope you can accommodate our request for FY 2019.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

G. K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

John Katko  
Member of Congress
Dwight E.
PENNNSYLVANIA-02
CA-52

Da'Salt
GA-13

Charlie Crist
FL-13

Jim Langevin
RI-02
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