

VETERINARY MEDICINE: A CRITICAL HEALTH PROFESSION

# »» Co-Sponsor H.R. 5654 and S. 3048, the Higher Education Mental Health Act of 2021

[aavmc.org/programs/advocacy](https://aavmc.org/programs/advocacy)

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*We support the Higher Education Mental Health Act.*

*The veterinary medical profession has higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation than the general population – even before the pandemic – and since then mental health concerns have been amplified.*

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This bill advances the current efforts of AAVMC and its members to better understand mental health and wellbeing within the academic environment and the efficacy of resources. AAVMC recognizes that policies and systems can impact the mental health and wellbeing of not only students, but the entire academic community.

This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Rep. David Trone (D-MD) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA). It has been introduced in the senate by Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA). The legislation would:

- Establish a national commission to study the mental health concerns facing students at higher education institutions
- Provide a report to Congress with information on the services available to students with mental health conditions, as well as the current policies in place to help students remain in school and complete their degrees
- Create a roadmap for improving the mental health services available at U.S. colleges and universities

The legislation is supported by many organizations, including the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the American Psychological Association and the Association on Higher Education and Disability.

## CONTACTS TO CO-SPONSOR:

Rep. David Trone (D-MD) – [Ata Khan \(Ata.Khan@mail.house.gov\)](mailto:Ata.Khan@mail.house.gov)

Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) – [Jacqueline Collie \(Jacqueline.Collie@mail.house.gov\)](mailto:Jacqueline.Collie@mail.house.gov)

Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) – [Michael Gamel-McCormick \(Michael\\_Gamel-McCormick@aging.senate.gov\)](mailto:Michael_Gamel-McCormick@aging.senate.gov) or [Wesley Whistle \(Wesley\\_Whistle@casey.senate.gov\)](mailto:Wesley_Whistle@casey.senate.gov)



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# »»» Co-Sponsor the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) Enhancement Act, H.R. 2447 & S. 2215

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*This program will help ensure that the profession of veterinary medicine is able to provide modern animal health, public health, and disease control services throughout rural areas of the United States.*

*This program can assist with the rising costs of education and removing the tax will help lessen the shortage of veterinarians in areas of need.*

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Through the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (<https://nifa.usda.gov/program/veterinary-medicine-loan-repayment-program>) provides loan repayment of up to \$25,000 per year for three years. Payments are made to veterinarians with qualified student loans who have agreed to practice in areas that the US Department of Agriculture has designated as having a shortage of veterinarians, especially for food animals.

Since 2010, the inception of the program, USDA has made 552 awards to public practice and food animal veterinarians in 47 states and Puerto Rico.

Unfortunately, the program is subject to a 37 percent withholding tax. Essentially, for each dollar appropriated for the program, 37 cents is withheld and transferred back to the U.S. Treasury. If this were not the case, one additional veterinarian could be provided with loan repayment for every three awards currently made. This bipartisan legislation would eliminate that tax disparity.

The National Health Service Corps Loan Repayment Program is already tax free for most other healthcare professions.

## **CONTACTS TO CO-SPONSOR:**

Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) – Olivia Kirchberg ([Olivia.Kirchberg@mail.house.gov](mailto:Olivia.Kirchberg@mail.house.gov))

Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE) – Josh Jackson ([Josh.Jackson@mail.house.gov](mailto:Josh.Jackson@mail.house.gov))

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) – Kyle Varner ([Kyle\\_Varner@ag.senate.gov](mailto:Kyle_Varner@ag.senate.gov))

Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID) – Mike Quickel ([Mike\\_Quickel@finance.senate.gov](mailto:Mike_Quickel@finance.senate.gov))



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# »» Co-Sponsor the Student Assisted Vaccination Effort (SAVE) Act, H.R. 5699 & S. 2114

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*Students at colleges of veterinary medicine have contributed to mass vaccination efforts since vaccines became widely available. We are a part of over 1.2 million students of the health professions who are doing our part to bring the pandemic to an end.*

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The SAVE Act is bipartisan legislation that simply codifies existing emergency provisions, and makes permanent the ability of health professions students to vaccinate during federally declared public health emergencies.

On March 12 of 2021, the White House announced the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act Covid-19 Declaration. This declaration was supported by the AAVMC and a dozen other health professions organizations through Students Assist America (SAA) [https://www.aacom.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/saa-letter-to-hhs-prep-act-final-1-27-21.pdf?sfvrsn=c2710897\\_2](https://www.aacom.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/saa-letter-to-hhs-prep-act-final-1-27-21.pdf?sfvrsn=c2710897_2)

The SAVE Act would permanently authorize more than 1 million skilled veterinary, medical, nursing, pharmacy, dental and other students to administer COVID-19 vaccinations with supervision.

As the Omicron variant has swept across the globe, it has become increasingly important to utilize all of the health professions in the ongoing effort to provide vaccines to as many people as possible. Veterinary medical students and faculty have stepped up across the country to assist in this effort, and will continue to do so as long as the pandemic persists.

The SAVE Act would continue actions that have already been approved by HHS and are already taking place: allowing our students, with appropriate supervision, to provide vaccines, once a public health emergency has been declared.

We ask that you also co-sponsor this act.

## CONTACTS TO CO-SPONSOR:

Rep. Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ) — Adam Finkel ([adam.finkel@mail.house.gov](mailto:adam.finkel@mail.house.gov))

Rep. David McKinley (R-WV) — Allie Hildebrand ([Allie.hildebrand@mail.house.gov](mailto:Allie.hildebrand@mail.house.gov))

Sen. Mark Kelly (D-AZ) — Katherine Phillips ([katherine\\_phillips@kelly.senate.gov](mailto:katherine_phillips@kelly.senate.gov))

Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) — Maria Olson ([maria\\_olson@help.senate.gov](mailto:maria_olson@help.senate.gov))

