TELL CONGRESS: FUND LORNA BREEN ACT PROGRAMS

Health Workers Experience Alarming Levels of Burnout and Poor Mental Health

Dr. Lorna Breen, Nurse Tristin Smith, and Dr. William West were dedicated health workers, loving family members, and supportive friends. Tragically, they also died by suicide.

Lorna, Tristin, and William are heartbreaking examples of the mental health crisis plaguing modern medicine. **Health workers' mental health is worse than any other segment of the U.S. workforce, and nearly half of the healthcare workforce is experiencing burnout.** Burnout is the primary driver for health workers planning their exit from practice.

Heavy administrative burdens, high-stress, trauma-filled environments, and a lack of inclusion in decision-making negatively impact health worker wellbeing and contribute to widespread burnout. Compounding this is the **deep-rooted stigma surrounding mental health care**, including intrusive questions about mental health on licensing and credentialing applications that actively discourage these professionals from seeking the mental health care they may need.

In the words of 28-year-old nurse Tristin before she died by suicide, "just when we think we are going to get the love and support we deserve, we get a pizza party and pens for the healthcare heroes."

The Lorna Breen Act is a lifeline for health workers, offering support and resources to improve mental health in our nation's largest and fastest-growing sector. The Lorna Breen Act programs are essential to ensuring a sustainable healthcare workforce, benefiting everyone who will require medical care in their lifetime.

Contact your Members of Congress and urge them to fund Lorna Breen Act programs now.

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First and Only-of-its-Kind Law to Protect and Strengthen Our Healthcare Workforce

In the wake of Dr. Breen's tragic death in 2020, the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation worked with partners, allies, and Congressional champions to develop the bipartisan Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act. The bill was enacted into law in March 2022 and reauthorized for another five fiscal years in February 2026.

This landmark law has already transformed and saved lives–improving the systems in which health workers are educated, trained, and practice, through:

- **HRSA Grant Programs:** Supporting 250,000+ health workers at hospitals, health systems, health professions schools, and community orgs. across 24 states to improve their mental health and wellbeing, and
- **NIOSH Program:** Providing 35,000+ healthcare leaders with training and resources to address the specific operational factors and burdens that drive their workforce's burnout.

A recent GAO report confirms that extending the Lorna Breen Act's grant programs have helped improve workforce retention and reduced depression and anxiety among health workers.

Key successes include:

- **35% reduction in turnover**
- **37% reduction in burnout**
- **50% decrease in mental health conditions**
- **47% improvement in job satisfaction**

The Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation is accelerating the implementation of the NIOSH program—successfully removing stigmatizing mental health questions from licensing and credentialing applications for **over 3 million health workers**, while helping **30+ health systems** dramatically reduce administrative burdens that drive their workforces' burnout.

We must continue this life-saving, systems-changing work to keep our healthcare workforce strong, supported, and ready to care for us all.

Consistent with the reauthorization, which prioritize projects that reduce administrative burden, Congress should provide **$45 million for Lorna Breen Act programs** for fiscal year 2027:

- $35M for two HRSA grant programs to reduce burnout and improve health workers' mental health.
- $10M for NIOSH's work to support hospital leaders and improve their workforce's wellbeing.

Tens of billions of dollars are directed annually for healthcare workforce creation initiatives, but the Lorna Breen Act programs are the only ones to directly support workforce retention. With shortages of nurses, physicians, dentists, and pharmacists projected for 2038, we can't afford to wait to make these critical investments. A coalition of nearly 75 national organizations across healthcare agree and are calling on the House of Representatives and the Senate to fully fund these programs.

Congress must fund Lorna Breen Act programs now. When health workers thrive, our healthcare system is stronger, safer, and more effective for all.

18,000+ messages from health workers, healthcare leaders, families, and friends have been sent to Congress underscoring that help is needed now more than ever.

"My amazing husband died by suicide in 2022. He was afraid to seek mental health care; he thought he could lose his job as a surgeon. This loss is enormous, tragic, and could have been prevented if he wouldn't have feared punishment and stigma of needing help at a very stressful time in his life. This should never happen again."

"As a medical student, I would personally suffer from the consequences of losing this Act. Please support future doctors of America."

"In 2023, my sister-in-law died by suicide. Ask her patients, her coworkers, her family, her friends what an outstanding nurse she was. Burnout and mental health issues are real, even in those who treat it daily, who see all the things, who take all the stress from their patients home every day."