



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

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May 6, 2021

The Honorable Bob Casey  
393 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Casey and Murkowski:

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) applauds Senators Bob Casey (D-PA) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) for introducing the bipartisan Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act of 2021. AARC strongly supports this important legislation which will ensure a more diverse allied health profession workforce, including respiratory care.

Our Association and the respiratory therapists we represent are especially pleased that our profession will be included in this Congress' version of the legislation. As frontline health care professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are concerned about the continued need for respiratory services that will result as patients face with the long-term effects of the virus. Since there are many unanswered questions concerning the virus' impact on lung health as well as the ongoing burden of respiratory diseases, like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), we need to ensure we will have the resources and respiratory therapists necessary to meet the demands of a diversified workforce.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "employment of respiratory therapists is projected to grow 19 percent from 2019 to 2029, much faster than the average for all occupations. Growth in the middle-aged and elderly population will lead to an increased incidence of respiratory conditions such as COPD and pneumonia. These respiratory disorders can permanently damage the lungs or restrict lung function."

The Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act is an important step in addressing the shortages of health care professionals nationwide in the allied health field. Providing grants administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to help recruit and retain students from racial and ethnic minorities underrepresented in the professions of respiratory therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech language pathology, and audiology, will prepare the allied health professional workforce to meet the future health care needs of those who rely upon them. This support will ensure the future respiratory workforce available to manage and treat lung problems reflects the diversity of the patient population.

The AARC appreciates your leadership on the Allied Health Workforce Diversity Act, and we look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheri Tooley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheri Tooley BSRT, RRT, RRT-NPS, AE-C, CPFT, FAARC  
President and CEO 2021-2022