

December 6, 2021

President

Jerome C. Siy, MD, MHA, SFHM
Saint Paul, Minnesota

President-Elect

Rachel Thompson, MD, MPH, SFHM
Snoqualmie, Washington

Treasurer

Kris Rehm, MD, SFHM
Nashville, Tennessee

Secretary

Flora Kisuule, MD, MPH, SFHM
Baltimore, Maryland

Immediate Past President

Danielle Scheurer, MD, MSCR, SFHM
Charleston, South Carolina

Board of Directors

Tracy Cardin, ACNP-BC, SFHM
Oak Park, Illinois

Bryce Gartland, MD, SFHM
Atlanta, Georgia

Efrén C. Manjarrez, MD, SFHM, FACP
Davie, Florida

Mark W. Shen, MD, SFHM
Austin, Texas

Darlene Tad-y, MD, SFHM
Aurora, Colorado

Chad T. Whelan, MD, MHSA, SFHM
Tucson, Arizona

Robert P. Zipper, MD, MMM, SFHM
Bend, Oregon

Chief Executive Officer

Eric E. Howell, MD, MHM

The Honorable Haley Stevens
House of Representatives
1510 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
House of Representatives
271 Canon Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David McKinley
House of Representatives
2239 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Judy Chu
House of Representatives
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Wild
House of Representatives
1027 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi
House of Representatives
115 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cynthia Axne
House of Representatives
1034 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stevens, Wild, Fitzpatrick, Krishnamoorthi, McKinley, Axne, and Chu,

The Society of Hospital Medicine (SHM), representing the nation's hospitalists, is pleased to offer our support of the effort to designate September 17th as National Physician Suicide Awareness Day.

Hospitalists are front-line physicians in America's acute care hospitals and focus on the general medical care of hospitalized patients. As a result, our members have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic caring for patients. While the issue of physician wellness long precedes the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been compounded by the added physical health risks and mental and emotional stressors of caring for patients with COVID. In addition to the obvious physical health risks, hospitalists face significant mental and emotional stress caring for COVID patients. On top of working exceedingly long hours and more shifts due to high volumes and provider shortages, many hospitalists have experienced the loss of several patients in a single shift. While the loss of a single patient under ordinary circumstances is difficult, this scale of loss takes an unprecedented toll on those whose primary professional and personal goals are to help and heal people.



The pandemic has greatly exacerbated the previously high rates of physician burnout, stress, and trauma. According to a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, six in 10 health workers reported pandemic stress had harmed their mental health, three in 10 had considered leaving health care, and more than 50 percent said they are burned out. Despite these sobering statistics, clinicians face stigma, structural impediments, and cultural barriers to access care and seek help for their mental health challenges.

SHM is proud to support the resolution that recognizes September 17th as “National Physician Suicide Awareness Day” to raise awareness, reduce the stigma of mental health issues, and promote a national discussion about physician suicide. This resolution is an important first step in addressing the crisis of physician suicide and burnout.

Thank you for raising awareness on such an important issue.

Sincerely,

Jerome Siy, MD, MHA, SFHM

President, Society of Hospital Medicine

