



Students Assist America

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Students Assist America Bill Introduced in U.S. Senate to Permanently Allow Students to Vaccinate

The SAVE Act permits health professions students to administer vaccines with supervision during future public health emergencies

June 17, 2021

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Bethesda, MD) – [Students Assist America](#) (SAA), an interprofessional initiative of 12 associations spearheaded by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, has advocated for more than a year to enable qualified students to help the U.S. healthcare workforce in times of crisis. Today, SAA applauds the introduction of *The Student Assisted Vaccination Effort (SAVE) Act* – bipartisan legislation that extends existing emergency provisions and makes permanent the ability of health professions students to vaccinate during federally declared public health emergencies.

“Students Assist America has proven that by working together, across healthcare professions, we can change the way we think of students and what they can and should be able to do to protect our nation’s health,” **said AACOM President and CEO Dr. Robert A. Cain.** “The previous amendment to the *Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act COVID-19 Declaration* [we proposed](#) has helped pave the way for this commonsense expansion and we are grateful for the leadership of Senators Kelly and Collins to make it lasting.”

Introduced today by U.S. Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Susan Collins (R-ME), the bill builds off of the amendment to the PREP Act declaration announced by [The White House](#) on March 12, and permanently authorizes more than one million skilled medical, nursing, pharmacy, dental, veterinary, PA, optometry and other health professions students to administer COVID-19 vaccines with supervision.

“The pandemic demonstrated the critical role our first responders play in vaccinating Americans, and the need to expand this role to health care students,” **said Senator Mark Kelly.** “The SAVE Act would help us vaccinate

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more Americans and enable us to more swiftly recover from future public health emergencies.”

“With each COVID-19 vaccination, we have come closer to ending this terrible pandemic,” **said Senator Collins**. “The remarkable efforts made by health care professionals, hospitals and community health centers, state public health agencies, volunteers, and the National Guard enabled us to quickly distribute these life-saving vaccinations. The mobilization of health profession students was also a key part of this successful distribution effort that is ongoing. To help prepare for future health emergencies, our bipartisan bill would permanently allow qualified students to immediately step up to support mobilization efforts and administer vaccines during public health crises, which will help protect communities.”

Enacting policies now that help the country prepare for future pandemics is of the utmost importance as the lack of a sufficient workforce hindered the pace of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. The SAVE Act would help establish consistent options for vaccinators across all states and territories that can be implemented immediately. Building a stronger national infrastructure to meet public health needs is critical, as it is not a question of if – but when – the next crisis occurs.

Since the year 2000, the world has experienced no fewer than five pandemics or novel viral outbreaks, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome ([SARS](#)) in 2002-2003, swine flu ([H1N1](#)) in 2009 and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome ([MERS](#)) in 2012-2013. The [Ebola](#) outbreak then struck West Africa in 2014-2016, with additional cases reported through 2021. Over the past 18 months, [COVID-19](#) has spread across the globe and as of June 11, the World Health Organization [reports](#) more than 174 million confirmed worldwide cases and more than 3,768,000 deaths.

“Allowing students to be vaccinators during emergencies is important for the public and for us as students. We can only learn so much from the books – a lot of our learning will come from doing,” **said MacKenzie North**, a second-year medical student at Marian University College of Osteopathic Medicine. “Having the opportunity to serve my community as a vaccinator put into perspective what it really means to work in healthcare and I think it will make me a better physician.”

Lucinda Maine, PhD, RPh, EVP & CEO of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy and SAA member, adds, “Students in pharmacy and other professions have been part of America’s flu vaccination response for decades. It only makes sense that they should be able to participate as vaccinators when the country needs them the most – now and in the future.”

About SAA

[Students Assist America \(SAA\)](#) is an interprofessional initiative of 12 associations spearheaded by the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine. Through SAA, future physicians, physician assistants, nurses, social workers, veterinarians, dentists and dental hygienists, public health experts, optometrists, pharmacists, psychologists and allied health professionals have joined together as an interdisciplinary safety net to ensure that the weight of the COVID-19 emergency does not crush the US healthcare system and put Americans at further risk. The collaborative is now exploring how students can help address other public health needs related to the pandemic that include wellness and resilience in the face of the country’s collective trauma.

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