

McConnell Supports Job Training and Opioid and Substance Abuse Epidemic Response in Appalachian Region

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced today the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has awarded the Fletcher Group with a \$1.68 million Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization (POWER) grant. Senator McConnell contacted Tim Thomas, Federal Co-Chair of the ARC, in support of the federal competitive grant.

The ARC grant will be used to create the “Recovery, Hope, Opportunity and Resiliency” (RHOAR) project, which will include partner organizations like Recovery Kentucky, the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, FAHE, and the Kentucky Housing Corporation. Together, the group plans to establish new centers that will help Kentuckians in recovery combat their addiction, achieve meaningful employment, and contribute to their communities.

“The compounding problems of unemployment and the opioid and substance abuse epidemic have seriously damaged Kentucky communities, but organizations like the Fletcher Group and the Don Ball Foundation are developing new strategies to fight back,” said Senator McConnell. “I was proud to support this application for competitive federal grant resources to help open new recovery centers, which will also focus on education and workforce training opportunities. We know that wrap-around services—including stable employment, reliable housing, and treatment programs—boost an individual’s chances of long-term sobriety.”

“Thanks to this critical funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Recovery, Hope, Opportunity and Resiliency (RHOAR) initiative will address the challenging issues of opioid abuse head-on by helping to establish additional recovery centers modeled after the successful Recovery Kentucky program,” said Ernie Fletcher, former Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and current Chairman of the Board and Chief Medical Officer for the Fletcher Group. “This initiative will include a workforce development component to provide meaningful employment opportunities for those recovering from addiction. We are grateful to Mira and the late Don Ball who made this effort possible and to Leader McConnell for his support of the RHOAR initiative to help more Kentuckians overcome addiction and embark on a life of hope and purpose.”

As Senate Majority Leader and a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, Senator McConnell advocates for ARC and its targeted programs

supporting communities impacted by the downturn in the coal sector, including those in Eastern Kentucky. In particular, he secures funding for the POWER grant program, which gives local organizations the tools they need to make a positive impact in their communities. In the past two fiscal years, Senator McConnell has secured a total of \$100 million for the POWER grant program.

In addition to the RHOAR project, the following Kentucky organizations received ARC POWER grants:

- eKentucky Advanced Manufacturing Institute (eKAMI) for workforce training
- Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) for aviation maintenance training
- Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP) for opioid re-employment
- Southeast Kentucky Economic Development (SKED) for Supplier Education & Economic Development (SEED)
- FAHE for opioid re-employment
- Appalachian Artisan Center for stringed instrument company
- Housing Development Alliance for opioid employment in construction
- Lewis County for broadband study
- Carr Creek Alumni Association for tourism study

NOTE: This announcement builds upon Senator McConnell’s work to help those recovering from substance abuse return to the workforce. *The SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act*, signed into law by President Trump, included Senator McConnell’s “*Comprehensive Addiction Recovery through Effective Employment and Reentry (CAREER) Act*,” which expands grants and targets funding for treatment, transitional housing, job training and placement services to help individuals in recovery find their footing and maintain their sobriety.

The “*CAREER Act*,” will help connect people in recovery with employers who are in need of qualified applicants to fill jobs. It will establish a five-year, state-based pilot program in the hardest-hit states, like Kentucky, to support programs that help people in recovery get back to work and maintain long-term sobriety. It will also provide opportunities for those in recovery to access a stable place to live until they can secure permanent arrangements.

With new flexibility to use federal resources for career services and training, states will also be empowered to assist individuals transitioning from treatment to the workforce. By encouraging local businesses and treatment organizations to work together, men and women in recovery can get the help they need to find stable employment and housing.