

August 28, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-221 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 Capitol Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Mental Health and Substance Use Communities Support \$4.5 Billion in SAMHSA Funding

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) – a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and substance use treatment providers, advocates and payers committed to strengthening access to mental health care and substance use treatment – are writing to express our strong support for \$4.5 billion in desperately needed funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), as provided in the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act.

An appropriation of \$4.5 billion across key Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants, suicide prevention programs, and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) will be crucial to address the wave of mental health and substance use triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. According to a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Mortality and Morbidity (MMR) Weekly Report, one in four young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 say they have considered suicide in the past month because of the pandemic, further illustrating the nation's rapidly declining mental health during the pandemic. Similarly, as the pandemic began to affect our nation, drug overdoses increased 18 percent in March compared with last year, 29 percent in April and 42 percent in May, according to the Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP), a federal initiative that collects data from ambulance teams, hospitals and police.

Reports of the impact the financial crisis is having on front line providers are also disturbing. Nationwide field surveys demonstrate that, in the current financial environment, nearly half of organizations that provide mental health and substance use treatment services will not survive into January, 2021. On average, more than 80 percent of these providers have canceled, rescheduled or turned away patients. Further, providers of mental health and substance use services have received less than 1% of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Public Health and Social Service Emergency Fund (PHSSEF) allocations – with vast numbers of mental health and substance use treatment providers reporting that they have received no emergency assistance whatsoever.

With the converging mental health, substance use and fiscal crises presenting an enormous challenge to the entire behavioral health community, MHLG is seeking your bipartisan support for \$4.5 billion in SAMHSA emergency appropriations to meet the unprecedented needs of individuals, families and essential workers, and to provide needed assistance to the mental health care and substance use treatment providers struggling to battle the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
*American Association of Nurse Anesthetists**
American Association of Suicidology
*American Association on Health and Disability**
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
*Education Development Center**
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
International OCD Foundation
The Kennedy Forum
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
*Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute**
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
*National Health Care for the Homeless Council**
National League for Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
*Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)**
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA)
SMART Recovery
The Trevor Project
*Trinity Health**
Well Being Trust

* Affiliate Member