

September 21, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

The Mental Health Liaison Group appreciates your leadership in passing legislation to help states address the opioid epidemic and expand access to needed substance use disorder (SUD) treatment. As you work to design a final agreement on the legislation, we urge you to include Section 1003 of H.R. 6, the Demonstration Project to Increase Substance Use Provider Capacity Under the Medicaid Program, which would help states address urgent workforce shortages and expand access to needed SUD care.

This provision would establish a five-year demonstration project to help state Medicaid programs increase SUD provider capacity by adding new providers and expanding the services they can offer. At least ten states would receive planning grants to assess current provider capacity, identify gaps in treatment, and develop strategies to increase provider capacity through recruitment, education, training, and technical assistance. Up to five of those states would receive federal funds at an enhanced matching rate for increases in SUD services over what the state provided in 2018. The Senate companion legislation to this provision, S. 3383, includes a technical change that would allow a greater range of providers to participate. We recommend that the final legislation include this change.

Lack of access to treatment is an urgent issue facing people with SUDs, including opioid use disorder. Unfortunately, many SUD providers do not currently have the capacity to participate in Medicaid. For example, providers new to Medicaid may need help launching information and electronic medical records systems, setting up a process for reviewing utilization of services, and tracking quality measures. Providing technical assistance to providers to help them participate in Medicaid could significantly expand access to needed SUD care and enhance the quality of SUD services.

As national organizations representing mental health and addiction providers, consumers, advocates, family members and other stakeholders, we urge you to ensure this critical provision is adopted as part of any final opioid conference agreement. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Allies for Independence *
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Music Therapy Association *
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
American Therapeutic Recreation Association *
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies of the United States
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
The Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Disability Rights Network
National Eating Disorders Association
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
Residential Eating Disorders Coalition
The Arc of the United States
The Kennedy Forum
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

*non-MHLG member