May 21, 2019

The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy III

United States House of Representatives

304 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kennedy:

The undersigned national organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) are writing to offer our strong support for the Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act of 2019.

The MHLG is a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, payers and other stakeholders committed to strengthening Americans’ access to effective mental health and addiction care. Together, on behalf of the millions of Americans living with mental health and addiction disorders, their families, and communities, we advocate for public policies and funding to improve access to high-quality health care through prevention, early intervention, treatment and recovery services and supports.

The MHLG commends the introduction of legislation to strengthen implementation and enforcement of federal rules covering mental health and substance use disorders treatment at parity with other health benefits. In unity, we advocated tirelessly for the enactment of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, and recognize that increased transparency and improved accountability of health insurers is essential to fully realizing both the letter and spirit of this landmark law, and its application to the Affordable Care Act.

The Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act of 2019 would require issuers to disclose the analysis they perform in making parity determinations; their denial rates for mental health versus medical/surgical claims and the reasons, and require federal regulators to conduct a minimum of 12 random audits of health plans per year. Additionally, it would create a central online portal so that consumers can easily access publicly available information, as a one-stop shop, including information about their parity rights, information insurers submit about how they make parity decisions, results of audits, and serve to submit complaints. These key provisions will help ensure mental health and addiction coverage is in compliance with parity, and treatment ultimately becomes available to those in need.

Thank you for your continued leadership and strong dedication to mental health and substance use disorder parity. We look forward to working with you to ensure the enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

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 Mental Health Counselors Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychoanalytic Association

American Psychological Association

American Society of Addiction Medicine

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice

Center for Clinical Social Work

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Social Work Association

College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists

Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition

EMDR International Association

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

International OCD Foundation

Mental Health America

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Council for Behavioral Health

National Eating Disorders Association

National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Register of Health Service Psychologists

NHMH - No Health without Mental Health

Residential Eating Disorders Consortium

School Social Work Association of America

SMART Recovery

Treatment Communities of America

Trinity Health