

September 24, 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: Include \$4.5 Billion for SAMHSA in FY 2021 Continuing Resolution or Coronavirus Relief Package**

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 addiction treatment providers, advocates and payers committed to strengthening access to mental health care and addiction treatment – are writing to urge you to include desperately needed funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) – funding that was previously included in the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection and Schools (HEALS) Act – as an anomaly in the Continuing Resolution (CR) or as a priority in a forthcoming coronavirus relief package.

\$4.5 billion across key Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants, suicide prevention programs and Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHCs) will be critical to address the wave of mental health and substance use crises triggered by the coronavirus. 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've 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 COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the 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. As Congress works towards addressing the most urgent coronavirus-related priorities, it is imperative that adequate funding be dedicated to mental health and substance use disorder services in an effort to meet the critical needs of patients across the nation.

Reports of the fiscal crisis impacting front line providers are also disturbing. A recent nationwide field survey showed that a staggering 39% of surveyed behavioral health organizations believe

they can only survive *up to* another 6 months in the current financial environment, with 26% and 24% of behavioral health organizations having laid off and furloughed employees, respectively. Access to desperately needed mental health and substance use disorder services has been disrupted to the detriment of patients, with 54% of behavioral health organizations having closed programs due to COVID-19 and one-fifth having closed more than 20% of programs. Further hindering access to services, 65% of behavioral health organizations have had to cancel, reschedule, or turn away patients over the past 3 months.

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group urge Congress to prioritize swift relief funding dedicated to mental health and substance use disorder services and providers. With overlapping 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 for SAMHSA to be included as an anomaly in the CR or as a priority in a forthcoming coronavirus relief package in an effort meet the unprecedented needs of individuals, families and essential workers, and to provide needed assistance to the mental health and substance use providers struggling to battle the impacts of the coronavirus epidemic.

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 and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association of Suicidology  
American Association on Health and Disability\*  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice\*  
Centerstone\*  
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 for Research, Policy & Action  
Education Development Center\*  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium  
The Kennedy Forum  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National League for Nursing  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
Postpartum Support International  
Psychotherapy Action Network Advocacy \*  
SARDAA Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance  
SMART Recovery  
The Trevor Project  
Well Being Trust

*\* Affiliate Member*