

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr. President of the United States The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction professionals, advocates, payers and other stakeholders, we applaud your leadership and efforts to pass the American Rescue Plan Act, a landmark investment in our nation's health and well-being with dramatically increased federal resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and reopen the nation. In particular, we appreciate the substantial new resources it provides to bolster our country's capacity to serve and support the surging numbers of Americans with mental health and substance use needs, including in underserved areas and among at-risk populations.

The pandemic has strained the nation's behavioral health capacity at a time when we have seen dramatic increases in anxiety, depression, overdose deaths, and suicidal ideation -- including in children, adolescents, and young adults. The American Rescue Plan Act reflects Congress' recognition that this growing mental health and substance use crisis will not be simply and quickly resolved with a vaccine.

The American Rescue Plan Act addresses the current crisis by targeting new federal resources for community mental health and substance use treatment services, pediatric mental health access, suicide prevention, behavioral health workforce education and training, as well as mental health and suicide prevention programs for first responders and other healthcare professionals who have served on the frontlines in the fight against the pandemic. It also incentivizes states to implement multi-disciplinary behavioral health mobile crisis teams who can respond when someone is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, and dedicates new resources for schools to provide mental health services and supports to help students get back on track. And, importantly, it provides additional temporary federal resources to supplement states' efforts to help low-income older adults and people with disabilities live independently in their communities through Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services.

Beyond the significant new investment to expand the nation's behavioral health capacity specifically, the American Rescue Plan Act tackles the essential economic, employment, food and housing security, and childcare challenges millions of Americans have experienced as the pandemic spread. Significantly, the American Rescue Plan includes measures to make health insurance coverage available for more Americans, from expanding full Medicaid coverage for COVID-19 diagnostic testing and treatment, increasing health plan subsidies available through the Affordable Care Act, providing new incentives for Medicaid expansion, and extending Medicaid coverage for postpartum

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women – all important steps to expanding access to health and mental health and substance use treatment for more Americans.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry American Association of Nurse Anesthesists American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work American Association of Suicidology American Association on Health and Disability American Counseling Association American Dance Therapy Association American Foundation for Suicide Prevention American Group Psychotherapy Association American Mental Health Counselors Association American Psychiatric Association American Psychiatric Nurses Association American Psychological Association Anxiety and Depression Association of America Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law Centerstone Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) Clinical Social Work Association College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP) Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action **Education Development Center** Girls Inc. Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium International OCD Foundation The Jewish Federations of North America Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance Mental Health America

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> NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals NACBHDD and NARMH National Alliance on Mental Illness National Association for Behavioral Healthcare National Association for Children's Behavioral Health National Association for Rural Mental Health National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners National Association of School Psychologists National Association of Social Workers National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders National Health Care for the Homeless Council National Register of Health Service Psychologists Psychotherapy Action Network Advocacy **REDC** Consortium SMART Recovery The Jed Foundation (JED) The Kennedy Forum The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health The National Association of Counties The Trevor Project Treatment Communities of America Vibrant Emotional Health Well Being Trust