

February 24, 2025

The Honorable Mike Crapo  
Chairman, Finance Committee  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member, Finance Committee  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
Chairman, Health Education Labor and  
Pensions Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
Ranking Member, Health Education Labor  
Pensions Committee  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Crapo, Ranking Member Wyden, Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders:

The Mental Health Liaison Group ([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 mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) care. As trusted leaders in the field, our more than 100 member organizations are dedicated to elevating the national conversation around mental and behavioral health. We look forward to working with the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress to continue to advance policies which improve access to mental and behavioral health services and support the dedicated providers who deliver this care.

The state of mental health in America remains a national crisis, with too many Americans, across the lifespan, struggling with mental and behavioral health challenges without the support needed to manage and recover from these conditions. The crisis is exacerbated by many factors, including persistent workforce shortages, continued barriers to care, and enduring stigma.

- In the United States, 1 in 5 individuals experience a mental illness each year, and 1 in 20 experience a serious mental illness.<sup>i</sup>
- In 2022, more than 49,000 lives were lost to suicide in the United States.<sup>ii</sup>
- Millions of people across the US have a SUD. While overdose deaths are beginning to decline from a peak in 2021, fentanyl related deaths remain troublingly high.<sup>iiiiv</sup>
- In 2023, nearly 30% of high school students reported poor mental health, 20% seriously contemplated suicide, and nearly 1 in 10 made an attempt.<sup>v</sup>

The Mental Health Liaison Group has a long history of working in a bipartisan manner on the development, passage and implementation of mental health and SUD policies. The continuation of and steady funding for federal programs, which support access to behavioral health services and bolster the mental health and SUD workforce, are essential. Instability in these critical programs can have significant, damaging effects to providers and their patients who rely on them. As we noted last year ([letter](#)), the MHLG encourages reauthorization of the

bipartisan *Substance Use Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment Act* or *SUPPORT Act*, to ensure the continuation of these lifesaving programs and policies.

Further, Medicaid is the largest payer of mental and behavioral health services in the United States, providing essential health care coverage, services, and supports for individuals with disabilities and those with complex medical conditions. Together, Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) provide health insurance coverage to half of the children across the country. The role of Medicaid in facilitating access to mental health and SUD treatment cannot be overstated. As this Committee considers changes to the Medicaid program, we encourage you to work with MHLG Members to understand how policy proposals will impact the millions of children and adults with mental health conditions and SUDs who rely on Medicaid.

Given that both the Senate Finance Committee and Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee have a longstanding commitment to bipartisan collaboration on mental and behavioral health policy, we look forward to working with you as Congress and the new Administration seek to examine current federal investments. The national member organizations of the Mental Health Liaison Group stand ready to be a resource on federal grant programs and services which provide essential support to states and communities and facilitate access to mental health and SUD care. Please reach out to the MHLG Health Policy Committee Chairs, [Maeghan Gilmore](#), [Jennifer Snow](#), [Katrina Velasquez](#) and [Cynthia Whitney](#), with any questions.

Sincerely,

Active Minds

ACTNow for Mental Health (ANMH)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Academy of Nursing

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists

American Association on Health and Disability

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Mental Health Counselors Association

American Nurses Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association Services

American Therapeutic Recreation Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Centerstone

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Children's Hospital Association  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Collaborative Family Healthcare Association  
Committee for Children  
Community Catalyst  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
EAPA  
Emergency Nurses Association  
Employee Assistance Professionals Association  
Families USA  
Fountain House  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice  
Huntington's Disease Society of America  
IC&RC  
Inseparable  
International OCD Foundation  
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses  
The Kennedy Forum  
Legal Action Center  
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/Got Transition  
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of Peer Supporters  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Board for Certified Counselors  
National Council for Mental Wellbeing  
National Council on Problem Gambling  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Federation of Families  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National League for Nursing  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
National Women's Shelter Network, Inc.  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies  
NHMH - No Health without Mental Health  
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health  
Postpartum Support International  
PsiAN  
Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)  
REDC  
Sandy Hook Promise  
School Social Work Association of America

SMART Recovery  
Tourette Association of America  
Western Youth Services  
Youth Power Project  
Youth Villages

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<sup>i</sup> [Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health](#)

<sup>ii</sup> [Vital Signs: Suicide Rates and Selected County-Level Factors — United States, 2022](#)

<sup>iii</sup> [Products - Vital Statistics Rapid Release - Provisional Drug Overdose Data](#)

<sup>iv</sup> [Mental Health and Substance Use State Fact Sheets | KFF](#)

<sup>v</sup> [Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2013-2023," U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, August 2024.](#)