

September 14, 2026

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce
Committee

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce
Committee

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
House Ways and Means Committee

Dear Chairman Crapo, Chairman Guthrie, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Wyden,
Ranking Member Pallone, and Ranking Member Neal:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), the largest coalition of national organizations representing individuals and families experiencing mental health and substance use challenges, mental health and substance use treatment providers, advocates, and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality care, we write to strongly urge your respective committees to consider and advance the bicameral, bipartisan Mental Health Access and Provider Support Act (S.4202/ H.R.8081). As national and state organizations representing mental health professionals, we are acutely aware of the barriers that impede Medicare beneficiaries from accessing mental health services in times of need or crisis. The Mental Health Access and Provider Support Act improves Medicare Part B reimbursement for licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs), licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs), and licensed mental health counselors (LMHCs).

The United States is experiencing an inflection point; the number of Medicare beneficiaries is growing, and the number of LCSWs, LMFTs, and LMHCs is shrinking. According to the most recent Medicare Trustees Report, the number of Medicare beneficiaries is projected to grow to 77 million people by 2030, while LCSWs, LMFTs,

and LMHCs will see a decrease of approximately 225,000 providers in the same period.¹²

Given the growing demand for mental health services and declining access to Medicare mental health providers, reducing the Medicare reimbursement disparity for LCSWs, LMFTs, and LMHCs is paramount to ensure beneficiaries' mental health needs are met. Currently, these providers are reimbursed at only 75 percent of the Medicare physician fee schedule (PFS). The Mental Health Access and Provider Support Act aims to increase the Medicare reimbursement rate for these providers to 85 percent of the PFS. This increase would place LCSWs, LMFTs, and LMHCs at the same rate as other non-physician health care providers and remove a significant barrier to participation in the Medicare program.

Among the 68 million Americans currently covered by Medicare, 30% experience mental health conditions requiring professional care. Yet a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General report documents a dire shortage of mental health providers:

- **Fewer than 5 active mental health providers per 1,000 Medicare enrollees**
- **Medicare Advantage:** 4.7 providers per 1,000 enrollees
- **Traditional Medicare:** 2.9 providers per 1,000 enrollees
- **Rural and low-income areas:** Some regions have zero providers per 1,000 enrollees³

This shortage directly translates to Medicare beneficiaries being unable to access needed mental health care. The more than 177,000 LCSWs, LMFTs, and LMHCs currently enrolled as Medicare providers represent a critical workforce component. Improving their reimbursement ensures they remain in Medicare practice and encourages new providers to serve seniors.

We urge your committees to prioritize and advance the Mental Health Access and Provider Support Act without delay. With the Medicare beneficiary population

¹ 2025 Annual report of the boards of trustees of the Federal Hospital Insurance and Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Funds: communication from the boards of trustees, Federal Hospital Insurance and Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Funds. Retrieved from: <https://www.cms.gov/oact/tr/2025>

² Workforce Projections. <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/nchwa/workforce-projections>

³ A Lack of Behavioral Health Providers in Medicare and Medicaid Impedes Enrollees' Access to Care. US Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General. (2024). <https://oig.hhs.gov/documents/evaluation/9844/OEI-02-22-00050.pdf>

growing rapidly and mental health provider shortages are critical, every month of delay worsens access to care for millions of seniors.

For these reasons, our organizations respectfully urge your committees to meaningfully expand Medicare beneficiary access to mental health care by expeditiously considering and advancing the Mental Health Access and Provider Support Act.

Sincerely,

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Counseling Association
National Association of Social Workers
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Children's Hospital Association
Clinical Social Work Association
Crisis Text Line
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Huntington's Disease Society of America
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
Legal Action Center
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Agency Directors
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Eating Disorders Association
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
No Health without Mental Health
Psychotherapy Action Network
The Carter Center Mental Health and Caregiver Program
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project

CC: Senator John Barrasso
Senator Chris Coons
Representative Brian Fitzpartick
Representative Paul Tonko