

July 20, 2017

The Honorable Joseph P. Kennedy
United States House of Representatives
306 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kennedy:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing patients, providers, and child advocates, we write to express our support for H.R. 3192 which would ensure access to mental health and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services for children under the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

Families and children, from infancy through adolescence, need access to mental health screening and assessment and a full array of evidence-based therapeutic services to appropriately address their mental and behavioral health needs. Nearly 1 in 5 children in the U.S. suffers from a diagnosable mental disorder, but only 20 to 25 percent of affected children receive treatment. This is especially problematic, considering the significant human and economic toll of inadequately addressing childhood mental health and substance use disorders. For instance, untreated mental health and substance use disorders are associated with family dysfunction, school expulsion, poor school performance, juvenile incarceration, unemployment, and suicide.

For two decades, CHIP has been an essential source of children's coverage, ensuring access to high quality, affordable, pediatric-appropriate health care for children in working families whose parents earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but too little to purchase private health insurance on their own. Unlike Medicaid and private insurance sold in the marketplace exchanges, mental health and substance use disorder services are not required by federal law to be covered under CHIP. Given the prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders in children and the nationwide opioid epidemic, it is essential that all children and adolescents enrolled in CHIP have access to mental health and substance use disorder screening and treatment. H.R. 3192 would help to ensure that the 8.9 million children who rely on CHIP for health care coverage are able to access these necessary services.

We are grateful for your commitment to ensuring every child in America has access to mental health and substance use disorder services and look forward to working with you to advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Dance Therapy Association
American Muslim Health Professionals
American Psychological Association

Children and Family Futures
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Hospital Association
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Council of Administrators of Special Education
First Focus Campaign for Children
The Jewish Federations of North America
Lakeshore Foundation
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Mental Health America
NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Nemours Children's Health System
School Social Work Association of America
United Way Worldwide
Youth Villages