

April 4, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pension
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pension
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman, House Energy and Commerce
Committee
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce
Committee
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Pallone, and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the 40+ undersigned nation's leading mental health, addiction, and well-being advocacy groups, we write to express our strong support for the *Anna Westin Legacy Act of 2022*. The bipartisan, bicameral *Anna Westin Legacy Act* ([S.3686/H.R.7249](#)), led by Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Thom Tillis (R-NC), and Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA-06), David McKinley (R-WV-01), Ted Deutch (D-FL-22), and Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ-02), will reauthorize and expand the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders (the Center) first authorized under the *Anna Westin Act* ([S.1865/H.R.2515](#)) which was passed within Section 13006 of the 21st Century Cures Act ([P.L. 255-114](#)).

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted the mental health of Americans across the nation, with youth exhibiting the steepest declines in mental health. Medical admissions for adolescents with eating disorders more than doubled in 2020.¹ Eating disorder diagnoses have also increased 25% overall for youth ages 12 to 15 since the onset of the pandemic.² Despite increasing prevalence rates, most pediatric and adult primary care physicians lack training in eating disorders, with only 20% of medical schools offering any elective trainings in the subject.³ To meet this need, the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will enable the Center to develop pediatric and vulnerable populations protocols for screening eating disorders and continue training health care professionals to screen, briefly intervene, and refer individuals to treatment. We request that this bipartisan bill be promptly considered by the Committees and included in upcoming 21st Century CURES Act Reauthorization.

¹ Alana K. Otto, Jessica M. Jary, Julie Sturza, Catherine A. Miller, Natalie Prohaska, Terrill Bravender, Jessica Van Huysse; Medical Admissions Among Adolescents With Eating Disorders During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Pediatrics* October 2021; 148 (4): e2021052201. 10.1542/peds.2021-052201

² Dave Little, MD, Adrianna Teriakidis, PhD, Eric Lindgren, JD, Steven Allen, MD, Eric Barkley, Lily Rubin-Miller, MPH, April 2021, <https://epicresearch.org/articles/increase-in-adolescent-hospitalizations-related-to-eating-disorders>

³ Mahr F, Farahmand P, Bixler EO, Domen RE, Moser EM, Nadeem T, Levine RL, Halmi KA. A national survey of eating disorder training. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2015 May;48(4):443-5. doi: 10.1002/eat.22335. Epub 2014 Jul 22. PMID: 25047025.

Eating disorders are a serious mental illness that affect almost 30 million Americans during their lifetime,⁴ and have the second highest mortality rate out of any psychiatric condition,⁵ second only to opioid use disorder, accounting for 1 death every 52 minutes.⁶ The high mortality rate is caused by both physical comorbidities and a rate of suicide 23 times higher than the general population.⁷ When left untreated, eating disorders can lead to heart failure, kidney failure, osteoporosis, Type II diabetes, stroke, gastric rupture, hypoglycemia, and other medical injury, sometimes causing infertility and death.⁸

The timely and bipartisan *Anna Westin Legacy Act* would take simple steps to reauthorize and scale-up the programs that train providers to screen and refer patients with eating disorders. The bill implements recommendations from the Center to expand its authorization, building an eating disorder protocol for pediatricians and frontline community professionals and increasing the capacity for module rollout. Additionally, the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will continue equipping providers to identify and intervene for patients with eating disorders. This will build on the success of the Center, which has already trained over 7,000 primary care providers since 2019.

Amid the national pediatric mental health crisis, provider training and screening for eating disorders is critical to pandemic response and recovery. *Anna Westin Legacy Act* will build capacity for the Center's lifesaving work so that all individuals can be identified and treated for eating disorders. We urge the Committees to bring forward bipartisan, common-sense measures like the *Anna Westin Legacy Act* for consideration in 21st Century CURES Reauthorization.

Sincerely,

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research,
Policy & Action

2020 Mom

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Marriage and Family
Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in
Clinical Social Work

American Association on Health and Disability

American Counseling Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Mental Health Counselors
Association

American Nurses Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral
Healthcare

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

⁴ Deloitte Access Economics. The Social and Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in the United States of America: A Report for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Academy for Eating Disorders. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/reporteconomic-costs-of-eating-disorders/>.

⁵ Arcelus, J., Mitchell, A.J., Wales, J., & Nielsen, S. (2011). Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders. A meta-analysis of 36 studies. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 68(7),724-731.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Harris, E.C. & Barraclough, B. (1997). Suicide as an outcome for mental disorders: a meta-analysis. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(3), 205-228.

⁸ Jáuregui-Garrido, B. & Jáuregui Lobera, I. (2012). Sudden death in eating disorders. *Vascular Health and Risk Management*, 8, 91-98.

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Children's Hospital Association
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Girls Inc.
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Kennedy Forum
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families
National League for Nursing
Psychotherapy Action Network
REDC Consortium
SMART Recovery
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America