

July 21, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy,

On behalf of the undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), we are writing to express our immense gratitude for the inclusion of unprecedented and lifesaving mental health and substance use investments in the historic Bipartisan Safer Communities Act. MHLG is a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to strengthening Americans' access to mental health and substance use care. We applaud your invaluable efforts to successfully pass the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, a law which will save lives across our nation.

Rates of youth and adults experiencing symptoms of anxiety or depression, plus overdose deaths and suicide have tragically skyrocketed, exacerbating an already existing mental health and substance use crisis in our nation. For people of color, young people, and individuals who live in rural areas, suicide rates are growing faster than any other population group.ⁱ Combined with crushing behavioral health workforce shortages, the lack of widespread care integration, and worsening access and availability to mental health and substance use disorder services to the individuals who need them most, the needs of our nation demanded a strong response – and you delivered.ⁱⁱ

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act dramatically expands critical, lifesaving investments in our nation's mental health system, including over \$2 billion for school mental health professionals and school-based services, up to \$8 billion for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs), and up to \$5 billion for broader mental health programs such as Project AWARE (\$240 million), 988 implementation (\$150 million for FY 2022), Mental Health Awareness Training (\$120 million), the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (\$40 million), and the Community Mental Health Block Grant (\$250

million). Programs that support access to mental health services for children and adolescents in schools will receive \$1 billion: \$500 million for School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program and \$500 million for Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration grants. This legislation also requires the Department of Health and Human Services to review the implementation of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment benefit in Medicaid to identify gaps and deficiencies and provide guidance to the states to improve access to all covered services, including mental and substance use disorder services across the continuum of care.

In passing this bill, which was signed into law on June 25, 2022, Congress has taken historic, crucially necessary action by prioritizing mental health care and substance use disorder services. Because of your leadership, mental health and substance use care will be more accessible and available to millions of Americans. The expansion the CCBHC demonstration program, a transformative, evidence-based care delivery model, will enable new clinics to open and deliver comprehensive services, including 24/7 crisis services and delivery of services to children and adolescents in schools (of which 84 percent of CCBHCs report that they provide direct services at schools or plan to in the future).^{iii,iv} Further, increased funding for programs such as mental health awareness training, an infusion of funds to support the transition of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to 988, and school-based mental health services supports and strengthens capacity to inform the public of the availability of services and reach individuals who need care when experiencing crisis. In particular, the investment in 988 is critical as the new dialing code will serve as the main contact point for individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge.

Expanding access to lifesaving mental health and substance use disorder services is a crucial bipartisan effort. The members of the Mental Health Liaison Group are incredibly grateful for the bipartisan leadership you have demonstrated in passing the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which will save lives across the nation.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology
American Association on Health and Disability
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric 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
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Children's Hospital Association
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)
Crisis Text Line
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Inseparable
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC)
International OCD Foundation
Jewish Federations of North America
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
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 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 Network of Depression Centers
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
NHMH - No Health without Mental Health
RI International
Sandy Hook Promise
SMART Recovery
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
Vibrant Emotional Health

ⁱ <https://www.kff.org/other/issue-brief/a-look-a-suicide-rates-ahead-of-988-launch-a-national-three-digit-suicide-prevention-hotline/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.finance.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/SFC%20Mental%20Health%20Report%20March%202022.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/resources/2021-ccbhc-state-impact-report-transforming-state-behavioral-health-systems/>

^{iv} <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CCBHCs-Youth-Mental-Health-.pdf>