

November 17, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
SD-648 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions Committee
SH-428 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: HELP Committee Mental Health Bill – Include HR 7483

Dear Chair Murray and Senator Burr:

On behalf of the undersigned mental health advocacy organizations, we urge you to include the Cost of Mental Illness Act (HR 7483) in the emerging Senate HELP Committee package that reauthorizes key Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) programs.

Two recent reports highlight the pressing policy need for improved data gathering around the persons with serious mental disorders. First, the Satcher Health Leadership Institute recently released a report entitled, [*The Economic Burden of Mental Health Inequities in the United States*](#), estimating that between 2016 and 2020, **more than 116,000** premature deaths among indigenous populations and racial and ethnic minority groups were related to mental and behavioral health and that the excess cost burden of those deaths due to suicide, mental illness and substance abuse was **\$278 billion**. The report found **nearly 6 million** people are regularly excluded from federal estimates of mental and behavioral health because of the failure to consider incarcerated populations, nursing home residents, residents of assisted-living facilities, the unhoused, active members of the military and people institutionalized in psychiatric facilities, according to the report.

Similarly, in 2021 the Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance – (S&PAA) released a report entitled, [*Societal Costs of Schizophrenia and Related Disorders*](#), showing schizophrenia alone cost more than **\$281 billion** per year – and a properly financed, multi-year federal study would likely verify even higher overall costs.

These varying estimates underscore the fact that we lack high quality data specifying the cost impact of mental illnesses on our nation's health care, housing, and criminal justice systems. One challenge associated with this undertaking is the absence of reliable

surveillance data documenting the number of persons with schizophrenia living in the United States.

The bipartisan Cost of Mental Illness Act attempts to fill this data void in two ways. First, the legislation directs the Department of Health and Human Services to undertake a multi-sectorial study of the cost impact of schizophrenia and other severe mental illnesses. Second, HR 7483 authorizes SAMHSA to build on its existing efforts by commissioning a surveillance study. If properly conducted, such a survey would have the funding necessary to enumerate persons with schizophrenia residing in homeless shelters, county penal systems and nursing facilities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

ACTNow for Mental Health

American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare

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

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

International Society for Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction for Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association of Social Workers

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

No Health Without Mental Health

RI International

Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance