

Mental Health Liaison Group

October 17, 2017

Senator Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Wicker
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Cochran
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Cardin
509 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Thune
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Warner
703 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Schatz, Wicker, Cochran, Cardin, Thune and Warner:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), the undersigned organizations are writing today to express our support for the CONNECT for Health Act, S. 1016.

MHLG is a coalition of national organizations representing mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) consumers, providers, family members, payers, and other MH/SUD stakeholders. Together, on behalf of the millions of Americans living with MH/SUD, their families, and communities, we advocate for public policies and funding to improve access to high-quality care.

Given that approximately 25% of the adult population in the United States is reported to have a mental illness, and the fact that there is a growing shortage of behavioral health providers to respond to this significant need for service, the expansion of telehealth is critical. Telehealth services have been proven to drive important advancements for patients, expand access to care, improve health outcomes, overcome the stigma barrier, and reduce costs.

The CONNECT for Health Act would address this important issue by increasing the use of telehealth and eliminating many of the barriers to its accessibility. We specifically applaud Section 12 (Expanding the Use of Telehealth for Mental Health Services), which would expand telehealth by allowing the Secretary to lift current Medicare restrictions for some mental health services; most notably recognizing the patient's home as an eligible originating site for receiving telehealth services. Telehealth has the ability to reach a broad range of behavioral health consumers; and by eliminating some of the limitations on the use of telehealth monitoring services in Medicare, your legislation will help many patients access needed care.

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Laurel Stine, JD, American Psychological Association at lstine@apa.org, Angela Kimball, National Alliance on Mental Illness at akimball@nami.org and Debbie Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Mental Health America at dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net

Thank you for your leadership and continued dedication to expanding access to telehealth. The MHLG looks forward to working with you to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Dance Therapy Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors 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
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
The Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition for Maternal Mental Health
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National League for Nursing
National MS Society
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health Without Mental Health
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
Tourette Association of America
Treatment Communities of America