

June 5, 2019

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Alexander and Murray,

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), representing consumers, families, providers, and organizations advocating to strengthen access to high-quality mental and behavioral health care, strongly supports the Mental Health Parity Compliance Act of 2019, which Senators Murphy and Cassidy plan to introduce shortly. This bipartisan approach to promoting transparency and compliance with Federal parity requirements is critical for individuals living with mental illnesses and substance use disorders. We encourage the Committee to move this legislation expeditiously upon its introduction and to include it in the bipartisan legislation you are developing to reduce health care costs.

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (Federal parity law), which passed more than ten years ago was designed to make insurance coverage for mental health and substance use disorder treatment no more restrictive than insurance coverage for any other medical condition. Unfortunately, more than a decade after the law was enacted, health plans and insurers generally are not yet meeting the requirements of the law that govern how they design and apply their managed care practices for mental health and substance use services.

The Mental Health Parity Compliance Act fosters transparency and accountability, to ensure that health plans complying with the Federal parity law and that those confronting mental illness have equal access and coverage of needed mental health and behavioral health services. For far too long, individuals and their families have endured barriers to mental health and substance use disorder treatment that are likely more restrictive than those in place for other medical care. It is incredibly difficult for those confronting mental illness and their families to know if plans are complying with the law, given its complexity and the inherent challenge in trying to compare how mental health and substance use disorder coverage matches up with other medical coverage. Therefore, the legislation provides a needed process that requires transparency and accountability in how plans design coverage for mental health and substance use services and if that coverage is in accordance with federal law.

We have seen a dramatic rise in deaths resulting from the opioid epidemic and suicide crisis. This legislation will help ensure that patients have equal access and

coverage to mental health and substance use services, as required under current law.

MHLG thanks you again for your bipartisan efforts to improving health care access and affordability. By fostering complete implementation of the Federal Parity Law, the Mental Health Parity Compliance Act of 2019 will enhance those efforts, help improve access to care, and reduce long-term health system costs.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association on Health and Disability

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Mental Health Counselors Association

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychiatric Nurses Association

American Psychoanalytic Association

American Psychological Association

American Society of Addiction Medicine

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Health

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Social Work Association

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action

Education Development Center

EMDR International Association

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

International OCD Foundation

The Jewish Federations of North America

Legal Action Center

Mental Health America

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare

National Assn 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 Behavioral Health

National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

National League for Nursing

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Register of Health Service Psychologists

NHMH - No Health without Mental Health

The Psychotherapy Action Network

Residential Eating Disorders Consortium

Sandy Hook Promise

SARDAA Schizophrenic and Related Disorders Alliance of America

School-Based Health Alliance

SMART Recovery

The Trevor Project

Tourette Association of America

Treatment Communities of America

Trinity Health

Trust for America's Health