

December 9, 2020

The Honorable Angus King  
U.S. Senate  
133 Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Young  
U.S. Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators King and Young:

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, families, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality mental and behavioral health care, is writing to express our strong support for S. 3999, the Mental and Behavioral Health Connectivity Act, which would allow Medicare beneficiaries to continue to access mental and behavioral health services through telehealth in the near term and after the coronavirus pandemic concludes. Your leadership on this issue is critical for individuals with mental health or substance use conditions and those who face transportation or other access barriers beyond the current Public Health Emergency (PHE).

Individuals living with behavioral health conditions need timely and safe access to mental health and substance use disorder services not only during this crisis, but beyond it. The pandemic is exacerbating already existing behavioral health issues and leading to new instances of individuals suffering from anxiety, depression, and substance misuse. Current “originating site” requirements or geographic restrictions on the use of telehealth services only intensify the lack of access many face.

Your legislation also expands access to mental health and substance use telehealth services by allowing the use of audio-only communication modalities. We applaud you for ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries without access to smart phone or audio and video technology or reliable broadband internet can access needed care. Additionally, allowing the home to serve as an “originating site” not only empowers clinicians to engage their patients in mental health and/or addiction treatment where they reside, but also lessens the burden for individuals in rural or underserved communities who face transportation barriers.

The MHLG applauds your bipartisan commitment to improving access to telehealth for Americans who need mental health and substance use treatment services in this crucial time and moving forward. We pledge our support to help you move this important legislation through Congress.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Association of Suicidology  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Centerstone  
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
Girls Inc.  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International OCD Foundation  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
The 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 Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
The National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National League for Nursing  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
Postpartum Support International  
REDC Consortium

RI International  
Sandy Hook Promise  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America  
School Social Work Association of America  
SMART Recovery  
The Trevor Project  
Well Being Trust