

July 21, 2021

The Honorable Chris Murphy
136 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
520 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Tony Cardenas
2438 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Murphy and Cassidy and Representatives Cardenas and Fitzpatrick:

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 support the Parity Implementation Assistance Act (S. 1962/H.R. 3753). Your bipartisan leadership on this issue is critical for individuals living with mental health conditions and substance use disorders (MH/SUD).

Your legislation will ensure that states are able to implement the new requirements that were added to the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (federal parity act). In December 2020, the federal parity act was amended by the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) to require health insurers to perform comparative analyses demonstrating that they comply with the law. Moreover, the new CAA provisions gave states new authorities to request that insurers submit the analyses upon request.

However, collecting and reviewing these analyses can be time and labor intensive for state regulators and many may be reluctant to request the analyses without additional resources. The Parity Implementation Assistance Act authorizes \$25 million in annual grant funding to states for five years so that they can request and review the analyses. This will provide states with the capacity to fully implement the new requirements of the federal parity act as Congress intended.

State regulators have been at the forefront of parity compliance, and their investigations in recent years are what revealed that insurers were not doing what was needed to secure compliance. These investigations showed that many insurers simply did not have any sort of comparative analyses proving that they met all of the requirements of the federal parity act. This is what spurred Congress to take action last year to add the new requirements that made the production of comparative analyses compulsory for insurers. Now that insurers must perform these analyses, and states can request them, the logical next step is to provide states with the funding they need to meaningfully review the analyses. Your legislation does exactly that and will be instrumental in ensuring that the promise of MH/SUD parity is achieved.

The federal parity act has been in effect for over a dozen years but far too often individuals and families face unnecessary suffering and financial hardship because their insurance plans will not provide the same level of coverage for behavioral health care as they do for other medical care. It is critical that patients have parity in accessing MH/SUD services given the increased deaths from suicides and overdoses. The Parity Implementation Assistance Act will help stem the tide of this crisis and ensure that people get the treatment they need and deserve.

The MHLG thanks you again for your bipartisan commitment to achieving full parity and pledges our support to help you move this legislation through Congress.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Children's Hospital Association
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
International Society for Psychiatric Mental health Nurses
Lakeshore Foundation
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
NACBHDD
NARMH
National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Federation of Families
Postpartum Support International
REDC Consortium
RI International
SMART Recovery
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Kennedy Forum
The Trevor Project
Well Being Trust
Wounded Warrior Project