

March 4, 2021

The Honorable Paul Tonko  
2369 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Katko  
2428 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Tonko and Representative Katko,

On behalf of the undersigned mental health and substance use disorder organizations, we write in support of the *COVID-19 Mental Health Research Act*. This legislation directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), acting through the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), to conduct or support research on the mental health consequences of SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19. Appropriately responding to the mental health challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is of the utmost importance, and we are thankful that action is being proposed to carry out and support research on this issue.

People living with mental health conditions are experiencing worsening symptoms and individuals may develop new mental health problems in response to fear, self-isolation, and physical distancing stemming from the national pandemic. Preliminary evidence suggests that symptoms of anxiety and depression and self-reported stress are common psychological reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> However, researchers also assert that available literature has only emerged from a handful of the affected countries, and there exists a need for more representative research from other affected countries, especially for vulnerable populations.<sup>2</sup>

Despite suggestions that mental health crises and suicide rates will worsen, this is not inevitable.<sup>3</sup> By prioritizing research on our nation's mental health, we can address previous and present concerns and effectively mitigate future needs beyond the crisis at hand. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

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 Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatry

American Association of Suicidology

American Association on Health and Disability

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Group Psychotherapy Association

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<sup>1</sup> Rajkumar, Ravi. (April 10, 2020). COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature. *Asian journal of psychiatry*, 52, 102066. Retrieved from [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7151415/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7151415/)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Gunnell, D.; Appleby, L.; Arensman, E.; Hawton, K.; John, A.; Kapur, N. ... Pirkis, J. (April 21, 2020). Suicide Risk and prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic. *The lancet psychiatry*. Retrieved from [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(20\)30171-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(20)30171-1/fulltext)

American Mental Health Counselors  
Association

American Nurses 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 Health and Wellness

Children and Adults with Attention-  
Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Social Work Association

College of Psychiatric and Neurologic  
Pharmacists

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy  
& Action

Education Development Center

EMDR International Association

Families USA

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and  
Social Justice

The Jewish Federations of North America

International OCD Foundation

International Society For Psychiatric Mental  
Health Nurses

The Kennedy Forum

\*Lakeshore Foundation

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 Children's Behavioral  
Health (NACBH)

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of County Behavioral  
Health & Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of Pediatric Nurse  
Practitioners

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Mental Health  
Program Directors

National Center of Excellence for Eating  
Disorders

National Disability Rights Network

National Eating Disorders Association

National Federation of Families for Children's  
Mental Health (NFFCMH)

National League for Nursing

Postpartum Support International

Psychotherapy Action Network Advocacy

Residential Eating Disorders Consortium

SARDAA Schizophrenia and Related Disorders  
Alliance

School Social Work Association of America

SMART Recovery

The Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and  
Social Justice

\*Not a MHLG Member

The Trevor Project

Treatment Communities of America