

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction professionals, advocates, payers and other stakeholders, we applaud your leadership and efforts to pass the American Rescue Plan Act, a landmark investment in our nation's health and well-being with dramatically increased federal resources to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and reopen the nation. In particular, we appreciate the substantial new resources it provides to bolster our country's capacity to serve and support the surging numbers of Americans with mental health and substance use needs, including in underserved areas and among at-risk populations.

The pandemic has strained the nation's behavioral health capacity at a time when we have seen dramatic increases in anxiety, depression, overdose deaths, and suicidal ideation -- including in children, adolescents, and young adults. The American Rescue Plan Act reflects Congress' recognition that this growing mental health and substance use crisis will not be simply and quickly resolved with a vaccine.

The American Rescue Plan Act addresses the current crisis by targeting new federal resources for community mental health and substance use treatment services, pediatric mental health access, suicide prevention, behavioral health workforce education and training, as well as mental health and suicide prevention programs for first responders and other healthcare professionals who have served on the frontlines in the fight against the pandemic. It also incentivizes states to implement multi-disciplinary behavioral health mobile crisis teams who can respond when someone is experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, and dedicates new resources for schools to provide mental health services and supports to help students get back on track. And, importantly, it provides additional temporary federal resources to supplement states' efforts to help low-income older adults and people with disabilities live independently in their communities through Medicaid Home- and Community-Based Services.

Beyond the significant new investment to expand the nation's behavioral health capacity specifically, the American Rescue Plan Act tackles the essential economic, employment, food and housing security, and childcare challenges millions of Americans have experienced as the pandemic spread. Significantly, the American Rescue Plan includes measures to make health insurance coverage available for more Americans, from expanding full Medicaid coverage for COVID-19 diagnostic testing and treatment, increasing health plan subsidies available through the Affordable Care Act, providing new incentives for Medicaid expansion, and extending Medicaid coverage for postpartum

women – all important steps to expanding access to health and mental health and substance use treatment for more Americans.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
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
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses 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
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Education Development Center
Girls Inc.
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
International OCD Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
NACBHDD and NARMH
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Psychotherapy Action Network Advocacy
REDC Consortium
SMART Recovery
The Jed Foundation (JED)
The Kennedy Forum
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The National Association of Counties
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America
Vibrant Emotional Health
Well Being Trust