

July 15, 2022

The Honorable Jack Reed
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reed and Senator Moran:

Thank you for your unwavering focus on suicide prevention and expanding access to mental health care. The undersigned mental and behavioral health organizations join to voice our strong support for S.4448, the Suicide Prevention Act. This bipartisan legislation will expand data collection and surveillance and establish a grant program for self-harm and suicide prevention services in emergency departments across the country.

This bill will help reduce the increasingly high suicide rates we see across all groups, especially as we exit the pandemic and learn more about how COVID-19 impacts the public's mental health. In 2020, we lost nearly 46,000 Americans to suicide, and approximately 43% of individuals who die by suicide previously visited an emergency department before their deaths.¹ By meeting individuals who are at risk where they are, in emergency departments, this bill will save countless lives.

By funding improved surveillance of suicide attempts and other instances of self-harm in state and local health departments, this legislation will expansively enhance data collection, allowing for a more timely and accurate response to concerning public health trends. This will enable state and local health departments and community organizations to create more meaningful interventions which can be implemented sooner, to prevent more suicides.

Additionally, this bill creates a grant program to fund suicide prevention programs in hospital emergency departments. Equipping emergency department staff with the tools and training needed to recognize suicide risk in patients and refer them for appropriate follow-up is vital in ensuring that patients are being treated swiftly and given the care they need. Additionally, we appreciate your recognition of ongoing treatment post-hospitalization that is often needed to intercept suicidality long-term.

Thank you once again for championing this important legislation. We urge its swift passage through Congress and look forward to future collaboration on suicide prevention and mental health policy.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association

¹ Ahmedani, B. K., Westphal, J., Autio, K., Elsis, F., Peterson, E. L., Beck, A., Waitzfelder, B. E., Rossom, R. C., Owen-Smith, A. A., Lynch, F., Lu, C. Y., Frank, C., Prabhakar, D., Braciszewski, J. M., Miller-Matero, L. R., Yeh, H. H., Hu, Y., Doshi, R., Waring, S. C., & Simon, G. E. (2019). Variation in patterns of health care before suicide: A population case-control study. *Preventive Medicine*, 127, 105796. Retrieved May 4, 2022 from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0091743519302725?via%3Dihub>

American Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association (APA)
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)
Clinical Social Work Association
Crisis Text Line
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)
Sandy Hook Promise
The Jed Foundation
Trust for America's Health
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