

July 27, 2026

The Honorable Mike Crapo
239 Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
2161 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Pallone
3107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Crapo, Chairman Guthrie, Ranking Member Wyden, and Ranking Member Pallone,

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), the largest coalition of national organizations representing individuals and families experiencing mental health and substance use challenges, mental health and substance use treatment providers, advocates, and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality care, we write in strong support of the bicameral, bipartisan Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act (S.3402/ H.R.8487). Led by Representatives August Pfluger (R-TX), Doris Matsui (D-CA), Mark Alford (R-MO), Angie Craig (D-MN), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Paul Tonko (D-NY), and Craig Goldman (R-TX) and Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Tina Smith (D-MN), Thom Tillis (R-NC), and Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-NV), both the House and Senate versions of this critically important bill have been met with overwhelming bipartisan support. We ask for your leadership in ensuring this much-needed legislation is advanced through committee and passed prior to the close of the 119th Congress, either as a stand-alone measure or as part of any legislative package.

As our country continues to face mental health, substance use, and workforce shortage crises, we are immensely grateful for Congress' historic support for CCBHCs, an innovative approach to care that data have shown helps to bolster the workforce and strengthen access to timely and quality care for Americans in need. CCBHCs were established by Congress in 2014 and launched through a demonstration program in 2017. They continued to expand under the first Trump administration in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Under the 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the demonstration program was expanded to add 10 new states every two years until 2032.

CCBHCs are on the front lines of the nation's crises, having dramatically improved access to a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use services to individuals in vulnerable situations; such services include, for example, 24/7 crisis services as a part of the 988 crisis system, hiring hundreds of new substance use-focused clinicians, expanding medication assisted treatment, and reducing patient wait times. CCHBCs are a successful, integrated, and modern way of delivering 21st century mental health and substance use care to individuals and families.

CCBHCs already have provided high-quality, lifesaving mental health and substance use treatment and care to millions of people across the nation. The Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act would provide those opportunities to even more communities. The legislation would help eliminate barriers to access among those who need it most, reduce wait list times so people receive care more quickly, and expand the capacity of states to address the overdose crisis.

The Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act would build upon the work done by Congress in prior years to support the CCBHC model by:

- Adding a prospective payment system (PPS) to the CCBHC state Medicaid option to support clinics in expanding services and increasing the number of clients they serve, while improving clinics' flexibility to deliver client-centered care and retain their workforce.
- Effectively reach more people in need by establishing CCBHCs under the Medicare program, allowing comparable Medicare status and designated payment as other safety net health care providers. While CCBHCs serve Medicare beneficiaries, establishing designated payment for CCBHCs under Medicare will improve workforce sustainability and foster the same outcome quality measures as demonstrated under CCBHCs in Medicaid.
- Creating opportunities to better integrate physical and behavioral health care by giving CCBHCs the option to offer additional primary care services within their PPS.
- Providing guidance for organizations primarily serving distinct populations — such as youth or veterans — to help understand how they can meet CCBHC requirements while continuing to provide appropriate, high-quality care across the lifespan.
- Promoting accountability within the program by establishing a national data infrastructure and repository, similar to the Federally Qualified Health Center Uniform Data System, that would allow SAMHSA and Congress to track program progress and outcomes.

Today, over 500 CCBHCs operate across our country, significantly strengthening Americans' access to vital mental health and substance use services. Thanks to consistent bipartisan Congressional support, CCBHCs have served an estimated three million people nationwide living with serious mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

For these reasons, our organizations respectfully urge your committees to consider and advance the Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Nursing

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists (AAPP)

American Association on Health and Disability
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association Services
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH)
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
The Carter Center
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Crisis Text Line
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
Easterseals, Inc.
Employees Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA)
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Huntington's Disease Society of America
Inseparable
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
The Kennedy Forum
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
National Alliance on Mental Illness
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Council for Mental Wellbeing

National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA)

National League for Nursing

National Register of Health Service Psychologists

NHMH - No Health without Mental Health

Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health

Treatment Advocacy Center (TAC)