

# Mental Health Liaison Group

September 19, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), the undersigned organizations are writing today to express our strong opposition to a new Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson (GCHJ) proposal aimed at repealing and replacing major portions of our current health care system. The GCHJ proposal fails to protect the health care coverage and consumer protections available under current law, particularly for individuals with substance use disorders and mental illness. Additionally, it would create a health care system built on state-by-state variability that would exacerbate inequities in coverage and most likely place millions of vulnerable individuals at risk of losing their health care coverage.

MHLG is a coalition of national organizations representing mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) consumers, providers, family members, payers, and other MH/SUD stakeholders. Together, on behalf of the millions of Americans living with MH/SUD, their families, and communities, we advocate for public policies and funding to improve access to high-quality care.

We recognize that the GCHJ proposal would require coverage of mental health and substance use disorder treatment consistent with Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) as part of the new Medicaid Flexibility Program. However, we do not support many of the other changes to the health care system in the proposal that would result in reduced access to substance use disorder and mental health treatment, including changes that would cap federal funding for Medicaid, end the Medicaid expansion, and eliminate mental health and substance use disorder benefit protections for Americans insured through the small group and individual markets. We have serious concerns with provisions in the proposal that would allow states to easily waive Essential Health Benefit requirements, end Medicaid expansion and change Medicaid to a per-capita or block grant financing system.

The ACA's Medicaid expansion, Essential Health Benefit requirements for mental health and substance use disorder treatment coverage, and extension of parity protections to the individual and small group market have surely reduced the burden of the opioid misuse and overdose and suicide epidemics and saved lives. Substance use disorder and mental health treatment benefits must continue to be available to Americans enrolled in the individual, small and large group markets as well as Medicaid plans and that these benefits are compliant with the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

Further, we are very concerned about rushing through any legislation to repeal and replace the ACA, including the GCHJ proposal, through the current budget reconciliation authorization, which is set to expire on October 1. Instead, we call on the United States Senate to set aside the GCHJ

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
c/o Laurel Stine, JD, American Psychological Association at [lstine@apa.org](mailto:lstine@apa.org), Angela Kimball, National Alliance on Mental Illness at [akimball@nami.org](mailto:akimball@nami.org) and Debbie Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Mental Health America at [dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net)

proposal and turn its focus to bipartisan efforts to stabilize the health insurance marketplaces, create competition among insurers, and lower the costs of health care.

We urge your support of the bipartisan policies being developed by the Senate HELP Committee through regular order, and stand ready to work with you and the full Senate to secure passage of legislation that would build upon the successes we have made in extending health care coverage to millions of previously uninsured individuals.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association  
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Association on Health and Disability  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)  
American Nurses Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA)  
American Psychological Association  
American Society of Addiction Medicine  
Anxiety and Depression Association  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Clinical Social Work Guild 49-OPEIU  
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition  
EMDR International Association  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC)  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Mental Health America  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
The National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
The National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)  
National Alliance on the Mental Illness (NAMI)  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National League for Nursing

National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health Without Mental Health (NHMH)  
Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association and Foundation  
Residential Eating Disorder Consortium  
Sandy Hook Promise  
School Social Work Association of America  
Treatment Communities of America  
Trinity Health of Livonia, Michigan  
Young Invincibles