

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Kim Schrier, MD  
Longworth House Office Building  
Room 1123  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe, MD  
Cannon House Office Building  
Room 102  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Schrier and Roe,

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, families, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality mental and behavioral health care, is writing to express our strong support for H.R. 6644, the Health Care at Home Act, which would require group health plans and health insurers to cover telehealth services, including mental health and substance use disorder services, during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Your bipartisan leadership on this issue is critical for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders.

During this unprecedented pandemic, timely and safe access to health care is of paramount importance and essential to limiting the spread of COVID-19. However, due to the highly virulent and infectious nature of the disease, in-person service delivery is often not possible and further threatens public health. Americans need expanded access to telehealth services to ensure that they can see a healthcare professional when they need care and that they do not increase the risk of spreading COVID-19. This is especially true for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, as the nation was already in the grips of concurrent opioid and suicide epidemics and the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened existing behavioral health concerns.

Your legislation temporarily requires group health plans and insurers to cover telehealth service delivery for benefits that are otherwise covered in-person, when those services can be safely and effectively provided through telehealth. We applaud you for explicitly specifying in the legislation that this includes mental health and substance use disorder services. We also commend you for requiring that health plans and insurers reimburse these telehealth benefits at the same rate as in-person delivery of care. Both of these provisions are critical as many beneficiaries and providers have found during the initial stages of the emergency that mental health and substance use disorder benefits were either not being covered through telehealth at all, or that reimbursement was far lower than it was for in-person service delivery. This legislation will provide those with mental health conditions and substance use disorders access to the care they need during this public health emergency and reduce the chances that our country will see a spike in suicides and overdoses.

The MHLG thanks you again for your bipartisan commitment to making access to telehealth possible for all Americans, including those who need mental health and substance use disorder treatment. We pledge our support to help you move this legislation through Congress.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom  
American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association on Health and Disability  
American Association of Suicidology  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society of Addiction Medicine  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium  
International OCD Foundation  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Legal Action Center  
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance  
Mental Health America  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
NACBHDD, National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability  
Directors  
NARMH, National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health Without Mental Health  
Psychotherapy Action Network  
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium  
Sandy Hook Promise  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America  
SMART Recovery  
The Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies  
The Kennedy Forum