June 10, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Health  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, Chairwoman Eshoo, and Ranking Member Burgess:

On behalf of the undersigned mental health and substance use disorder organizations, we write in support of Rep. Paul Tonko’s the COVID-19 Mental Health Research Act (H.R. 6645). H.R. 6645 directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), acting through the Director of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), to conduct or support research on the mental health consequences of SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19. Appropriately responding to the mental health challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is of the utmost importance, and we are thankful that action is being proposed to carry out and support research on this issue.

People living with mental health conditions are experiencing worsening symptoms and individuals may develop new mental health problems in response to fear, self-isolation, and physical distancing stemming from the national pandemic. Preliminary evidence suggests that symptoms of anxiety and depression and self-reported stress are common psychological reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic.1 However, researchers also assert that available literature has only emerged from a handful of the affected countries, and there exists a need for more representative research from other affected countries, especially for vulnerable populations.2

Despite suggestions that mental health crises and suicide rates will worsen, this is not inevitable.3 By prioritizing research on our nation’s mental health, we can address previous and present concerns and effectively mitigate future needs beyond the crisis at hand. For this reason, we urge you to continue to bring H.R. 6645 forward for consideration until it is passed into law.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom  
American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
Education Development Center  
International OCD Foundation  
The Kennedy Forum

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2 Ibid.

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
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 Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

*Lakeshore Foundation
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health (NACBH)
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health (NFFCMH)
National League for Nursing
Postpartum Support International
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
SARDAA Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance
School Social Work Association of America
SMART Recovery
The Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America

*Not a MHLG Member