

March 15, 2018

The Honorable John Katko
United States House of Representatives
1620 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Barrasso
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20002

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States House of Representatives
231 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20002

Dear Representatives Katko and Thompson and Senators Barrasso and Stabenow,

The undersigned national organizations are writing to express our strong support for the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (H.R. 3032) and the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2017 (S. 1879).

This legislation would authorize mental health counselors (MHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) to serve as Medicare providers. MHCs and MFTs are licensed and qualified to provide mental health and addiction services to the Medicare population. Recognizing these clinicians as Medicare providers would increase access to mental health and addiction services for the elderly and disabled, especially in rural and underserved areas. Counselors and MFTs are between 50% and 300% more likely to be in non-metro areas than other Medicare providers. In fact, only 18% of non-metro counties do not have a MHC or MFT, the lowest percentage for any mental health professions.

H.R. 3032 and S. 1879 would also help address the nationwide opioid crisis. Medicare beneficiaries have some of the highest and fastest-growing rates of opioid use disorder, with hospitalizations increasing by 10 percent per year. Medicare paid for one-third of all opioid-related hospital stays, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Increasing access to community-based addictions services would decrease hospitalizations, reduce costs, and improve addiction outcomes for our nation's seniors.

For these reasons, we support H.R. 3032 and S. 1879. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to quality mental health care and addiction treatment for all Americans.

Sincerely,

1. 2020Mom
2. American Art Therapy Association
3. American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
4. American Counseling Association
5. American Dance Therapy Association
6. American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
7. American Group Psychotherapy Association
8. American Mental Health Counselors Association
9. American Occupational Therapy Association
10. Anxiety and Depression Association of America
11. Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

12. Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
13. Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
14. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
15. Cities Thrive Coalition
16. Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
17. Eating Disorders Coalition
18. Families USA
19. Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
20. The Jewish Federations of North America
21. Mental Health America
22. National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
23. National Alliance on Mental Illness
24. National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
25. National Association of Community Health Centers
26. National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
27. National Association for Rural Mental Health
28. National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
29. National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
30. NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
31. National Board for Certified Counselors
32. National Council for Behavioral Health
33. National Disability Rights Network
34. National Eating Disorders Association
35. National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
36. National Health Care for the Homeless Council
37. National Multiple Sclerosis Society
38. Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
39. Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
40. The Trevor Project