

September 17, 2019

The Honorable Kamala Harris
United States Senate
112 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cory Gardner
United States Senate
354 Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Harris and Gardner:

The undersigned national organizations dedicated to strengthening Americans' access to mental health care write to extend our strong support for the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act of 2019. This legislation is a vital step in addressing our nation's dire shortage of mental health professionals and reducing the unmet mental health treatment gap for Americans across the lifespan.

The prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders in the United States is alarming. According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, in the past year alone nearly one in five adults in the United States experienced a mental or behavioral health problem. In addition, data indicate approximately 21% of youth aged 13-18 experiences a severe mental disorder at some point in their life; for children aged 8-15, the estimate is 13%. Untreated mental health disorders can lead to a host of adverse consequences, including homelessness, academic failure, unemployment, contact with the criminal or juvenile justice system, and suicide. With approximately 105.7 million Americans currently living in federally-designated mental health professional shortage areas, it is paramount to provide access to timely, appropriate, and effective mental health treatment to help individuals with mental and behavioral health conditions obtain the services they need to thrive.

As you know, there is a severe shortage of mental health professionals across almost all specialties, particularly in rural areas. A 2016 report from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projected the supply of personnel in selected behavioral and mental health fields to be 250,000 workers short of the projected demand in 2025.

We applaud your goal of building a robust mental and behavioral health workforce and the inclusion of more eligible mental health providers as part of this legislation. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to pass the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act of 2019.

Sincerely,

2020 Moms
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon
Centerstone
Council on Social Work Education
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Education Development Center
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Kennedy Forum
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Board of Certified Counselors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National League for Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
NHMH-No Health without Mental Health
Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)

Postpartum Support International
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
School-Based Health Alliance
School Social Work Association of America
Trust for America's Health