

May 21, 2020

The Honorable Rodney Davis  
1740 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kendra Horn  
415 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Anthony Gonzalez  
1023 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kurt Schrader  
2431 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ann Wagner  
2350 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Xochitl Torres Small  
430 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Davis, Horn, Gonzalez, Schrader, Wagner and Torres Small,

The undersigned organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders would like to express our strong support for the bipartisan *Health Care Protection Act*.

The COVID-19 national emergency has led to historic job loss in the U.S. with 38.6 million Americans filing for unemployment insurance as of May 15.<sup>1</sup> Economists estimate that 16.2 million workers have lost their employer-provided health insurance.<sup>2</sup> Although there are options for acquiring new coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace or applying for Medicaid, these options can mean a change in covered benefits, provider networks, and/or restarting a deductible.

Moreover, job loss is associated with increased depression, anxiety, distress and low self-esteem and may lead to higher rates of substance use disorder and suicide.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 47 million U.S. adults reported having a mental illness in the past year and 17 million adults and 3 million adolescents had a major depressive episode in the past year.<sup>4</sup> Research has shown large-scale disasters, whether traumatic, natural, or environmental are almost always accompanied by increases in depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use disorder, a broad range of other mental and behavioral disorders, domestic violence, and child abuse<sup>5</sup>. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003 left the country with increases in PTSD, stress, and psychological distress in patients and clinicians.<sup>6</sup>

As COBRA coverage is prohibitively expensive, the bipartisan *Health Care Protection Act* would provide critical subsidies to COBRA eligible individuals for six months. Subsidies would be equal to the employer contribution if the employee were still employed. Additionally, the legislation includes a special ACA open

<sup>1</sup> Rugaber, Christopher. (May 21, 2020). Nearly 39 million have sought US jobless aid since virus hit. *Associated Press*. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/78a6ce26d7b77d69530ffae781d621c2>

<sup>2</sup> Bivens, Josh & Zipperer, Ben. (May 14, 2020). 16.2 million workers have likely lost employer-provided health insurance since the coronavirus shock began. *Economic Policy Institute*. Retrieved from <https://www.epi.org/blog/16-2-million-workers-have-likely-lost-employer-provided-health-insurance-since-the-coronavirus-shock-began/>

<sup>3</sup> Panchal, N.; Kamal, R.; Orgera, K.; Cox, C.; Garfield, R.; Hamel, L.; ... Chidambaram, P. (April 21, 2020). The Implications of COVID-19 for Mental Health and Substance Use. *Kaiser Family Foundation*. Retrieved from <https://www.kff.org/coronavirus-covid-19/issue-brief/the-implications-of-covid-19-for-mental-health-and-substance-use/>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Galea, S., Merchant, R., Lurie, N. (April 10, 2020). The Mental Health Consequences of COVID-19 and Physical Distancing The Need for Prevention and Early Intervention. *JAMA Intern. Med.* Retrieved from <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2764404>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

enrollment period for anyone not enrolled in health insurance to provide another pathway for Americans to gain coverage during this unprecedented time.

Thank you for your leadership in pushing your Congressional colleagues to maintain the safety and continuity of health care for individuals and families. We look forward to working with you to protect Americans access to affordable and comprehensive health care during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Suicidology

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Mental Health Counselors 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

Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

Education Development Center

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

Innerwisdom, Inc.\*

International OCD Foundation

Mental Health America

NAADAC, the Addiction Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

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 Council for Behavioral Health  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
Postpartum Support International  
Psychotherapy Action Network  
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium  
Sandy Hook Promise  
SMART Recovery  
The Kennedy Forum  
The Trevor Project

*\*Denotes a non-MHLG member*