

May 11, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Speaker, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

Disasters are unpredictable and destabilizing life events. Decades of psychological research demonstrate the long-term adverse impact disasters can have on the mental health of individuals and communities.

The Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act is important, practical, and robust bipartisan legislation that would help survivors following disasters. **We respectfully request that you bring the Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act up for a vote as soon as possible.**

States, tribes, and territories need help enacting a mental health response following a disaster to help individuals heal faster and limit the long-term health consequences. The Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act would extend the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) to be available following Emergency Declarations, not only for Major Disaster Declarations. CCP helps communities implement a mental health response, which may include facilitating peer support groups, disseminating educational material on coping with trauma, establishing mental health hotlines, and connecting survivors with longer-term care.

In the last decade alone, there have been more than 4,000 Emergency Declarations in 37 states across 72 percent of all Congressional districts. From hurricanes, wildfires, and floods to terrorist attacks and building collapses, these emergencies have taken a physical toll, and also an emotional one, increasing substance use disorder, suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Specifically, following the Boston Marathon bombing, 11 percent of children in attendance exhibited PTSD symptoms, and 38 percent of Boston-area military veterans with PTSD were emotionally distressed. Additionally, experiencing a natural disaster by age 5 is associated with a 16 percent increase in mental health or substance use disorder by adulthood. A large-scale study of earthquake survivors found that 24 percent had PTSD. Emergency Medical Response workers are nearly 40 percent more likely to die by suicide, and 10 to 20 percent of firefighters who have responded to major wildfires experience PTSD.

The Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act recently passed the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee and the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with unanimous support. We encourage you to act swiftly and bring this bill up for a vote. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice

National Association of Counties

American Psychological Association

Association for Behavioral Healthcare

American College of Emergency Physicians

National Association of EMTs

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

Residential Eating Disorders Consortium (REDC)

Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of Elders (CARIE)

American Mental Wellness Association

National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)

International Association of Fire Fighters