



July 31, 2019

The Honorable John Katko 2457 Rayburn HOB U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 The Honorable Grace Napolitano 1610 Longworth HOB U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Katko and Napolitano:

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 (H.R. 2431). 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,

American Art Therapy Association 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 Foundation for Suicide Prevention

MHLG | MENTAL HEALTH LIAISON GROUP

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 **College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists** Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice International OCD Foundation The Jewish Federations of North America The Kennedy Forum Mental Health America 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 Eating Disorders Association National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health National League for Nursing National Register of Health Service Psychologists No Health without Mental Health **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