

December 21, 2020

The Honorable Ron Wyden  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance  
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto  
U.S. Senator  
516 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Wyden and Senator Cortez Masto:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our strong support for the *CAHOOTS Act* (S.4441) to enhance the utilization of crisis response services and mobile interventions for individuals experiencing mental health and substance-use disorder crises in local communities.

Recent reporting by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>1</sup> (CDC) indicated worsening mental health outcomes, increased substance use, and elevated suicidal ideation in the United States as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Crisis response without the involvement of behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals often places historically marginalized communities at disproportionate risk of harms and poor outcomes. It is crucial that all individuals in acute distress or experiencing a behavioral health crisis receive equitable and appropriate responses and care, separate from emergency medical and law enforcement interventions.

Mobile crisis outreach has been identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a core service and best practice<sup>2</sup> of behavioral health crisis care, but many communities do not have appropriate systems in place to respond to individuals in need. Mobile crisis outreach will be a crucial component of the future 988 crisis response system, which will be nationally operational by July 2022. By providing enhanced Medicaid and grant funding for mobile crisis services, the *CAHOOTS Act* will increase access to crisis resources and support effective responses for individuals in acute distress.

We applaud commitment to supporting effective responses to mental health and substance use-disorder crises. We pledge our support to help you move this important legislation through Congress.

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<sup>1</sup> CDC Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm> (August, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> SAMHSA National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/national-guidelines-for-behavioral-health-crisis-services-executive-summary-02242020.pdf> (February 2020)

Sincerely,

American Association for Psychoanalysis in  
Clinical Social Work

American Association of Suicidology

American Association on Health and Disability

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Psychiatric Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Centerstone

Children and Adults with Attention-  
Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Social Work Association

Eating Disorders Coalition

Education Development Center

The Kennedy Forum

Lakeshore Foundation

Mental Health America

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction  
Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Children's Behavioral  
Health

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of Counties

National Association of Social Workers

National Federation of Families

Postpartum Support International

RI International

Sandy Hook Promise

The Steinberg Institute

The Trevor Project

Vibrant Emotional Health

Well Being Trust