

# Mental Health Liaison Group

October 17, 2017

Senator Schatz  
722 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Wicker  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Cochran  
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Cardin  
509 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Thune  
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Warner  
703 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Schatz, Wicker, Cochran, Cardin, Thune and Warner:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), the undersigned organizations are writing today to express our support for the CONNECT for Health Act, S. 1016.

MHLG is a coalition of national organizations representing mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) consumers, providers, family members, payers, and other MH/SUD stakeholders. Together, on behalf of the millions of Americans living with MH/SUD, their families, and communities, we advocate for public policies and funding to improve access to high-quality care.

Given that approximately 25% of the adult population in the United States is reported to have a mental illness, and the fact that there is a growing shortage of behavioral health providers to respond to this significant need for service, the expansion of telehealth is critical. Telehealth services have been proven to drive important advancements for patients, expand access to care, improve health outcomes, overcome the stigma barrier, and reduce costs.

The CONNECT for Health Act would address this important issue by increasing the use of telehealth and eliminating many of the barriers to its accessibility. We specifically applaud Section 12 (Expanding the Use of Telehealth for Mental Health Services), which would expand telehealth by allowing the Secretary to lift current Medicare restrictions for some mental health services; most notably recognizing the patient's home as an eligible originating site for receiving telehealth services. Telehealth has the ability to reach a broad range of behavioral health consumers; and by eliminating some of the limitations on the use of telehealth monitoring services in Medicare, your legislation will help many patients access needed care.

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
c/o Laurel Stine, JD, American Psychological Association at [lstine@apa.org](mailto:lstine@apa.org), Angela Kimball, National Alliance on Mental Illness at [akimball@nami.org](mailto:akimball@nami.org) and Debbie Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Mental Health America at [dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net](mailto:dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net)

Thank you for your leadership and continued dedication to expanding access to telehealth. The MHLG looks forward to working with you to ensure the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy and Practice  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Mental Health America  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
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 and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Coalition for Maternal Mental Health  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National League for Nursing  
National MS Society  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health Without Mental Health  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America  
Tourette Association of America  
Treatment Communities of America