

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate Majority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
U.S. Senate Democratic Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators McConnell and Schumer,

We are leading national organizations representing people with mental health conditions, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders. We want to thank you for your urgent action to provide economic relief in this time of crisis.

We are writing to highlight three specific issues of critical importance to people with mental health conditions, their families and providers of mental health services. We note that 1 in 5 Americans has a mental health condition and everyone across the country is experiencing increased mental health concerns such as increased anxiety from isolation created by the current public health crisis created by COVID-19. We also know that those who are severely impacted by the virus either as patients or healthcare professionals may need follow up mental health care to address trauma from this experience. Given the need to provide mental health care and support during this crisis, we request the following changes:

First, **remove** the language excluding nonprofits that receive Medicaid reimbursements from the emergency Small Business Loan Program. Many non-profit organizations receive Medicaid funds, but are experiencing significant losses due to difficulties in billing, cancelled appointments, and increased demands requiring infrastructure-related costs. Additional funds through the Small Business Loan Program will be critical to supporting mental health providers as they continue employing staff and providing critical services to the public.

Second, we are very appreciative of the additional flexibilities in telehealth in Medicare and we request that you **expand** these flexibilities to allow reimbursement for audio only telephone services. Millions of Medicare patients who are quarantined and/or physically distancing do not have cellphones with video chat capability, and/or do not know how to use this capability. They may also not have internet service, broadband speed or sufficient data. This is especially true for those residing in rural areas or who are lower income. At a time when older adults, particularly those with chronic conditions are vulnerable to COVID-19 and isolated in their homes, they need to be able to pick up a phone and connect easily with mental health providers. Many people are not comfortable using video for services because of their mental health condition or lack of familiarity with the technology and they need urgent mental health care.

Third, we strongly urge you to specifically **add** funds for mental health care. The current bill has much needed resources for health centers, but it lacks emphasis on behavioral services during a time of multiple crises. We would request similar attention to allocating funds to organizations providing behavioral health care, support and crisis care. This could include resources for

certified community behavioral health clinics, community-based nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations providing mental health and support services as well increased funding for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Thank you again for your efforts.

Sincerely,