

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &  
Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &  
Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

The coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency has taken a toll on our constituents' mental well-being and understandably has been stressful for many Americans. We have witnessed firsthand for nearly two years how fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in both adults and children.

The effects of COVID-19 have been well documented, and the need for mental health and suicide prevention services only continues to grow. In 2020, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report found that 40% of American adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use issues, which is a 20% increase in prevalence from 2019. A Household Pulse Survey in late September 2021, found that 31.6% of adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder, which is up from 11% in 2019, and among those adults, 26.9% reported an unmet need for counseling or therapy.

Negative mental health outcomes have also worsened for children. Prior to the pandemic, up to one in five children ages 3 to 17 reported a mental, emotional, developmental, or behavioral disorder. According to a March 2021 Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, over 20% of parents reported their school-aged children having experienced an overall worsening of mental or emotional health, and just recently, the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a new Surgeon General's Advisory to highlight the urgent need for families, community organizations, technology companies, and governments to address our nation's worsening youth mental health crisis. The Advisory noted youth mental health challenges have been on the rise even prior to COVID-19, and from 2007 to 2018, the suicide rate among youth aged 10-24 increased by 57%. A further December 2021 report by the Covid Collaborative estimates that more than 167,000 children have lost a parent or in-home caregiver to COVID-19, which continues to raise our concerns about the emotional well-being of children.

In May 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives passed several mental health bills on suspension to address this ongoing crisis (listed below). **As the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions prepares future hearings, mark-ups, and floor schedules, we strongly urge you to bring forward the critical bills still awaiting consideration.** Furthermore, enclosed is a July 2021 letter from 69 mental health groups urging the committee to also act swiftly to approve these House passed bills.

1. **Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act (S. 1795/H.R. 1475)** – Introduced by Sens. Menendez (D-NJ), Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Booker (D-NJ) and Reps. Watson Coleman (D-NJ) and Katko (R-NY)
2. **STANDUP Act (S. 1543/H.R. 586)** – Introduced by Sens. Hassan (D-NH) and Ernst (R-IA) and Reps. Peters (D-CA) and Bilirakis (R-FL) -- S. 1543 passed the Senate on December 14, 2021
3. **Mental Health Services for Students Act (S. 1841/H.R. 721)** – Introduced by Sen. Smith (D-MN) and Reps. Napolitano (D-CA) and Katko (R-NY)
4. **Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act (S. 467/H.R. 1324)** – Introduced by Sens. Murkowski (R-AK) and King (I-ME) and Reps. Bilirakis (R-FL) and Soto (D-FL)
5. **Improving Mental Health Access from the Emergency Department Act (S. 2157/H.R. 1205)** – Introduced by Sens. Moore Capito (R-WV) and Hassan (D-NH) and Rep. Ruiz (D-CA)
6. **HERO Act (S. 2700/H.R. 1480)** – Introduced by Sens. Rosen (D-NV) and Fischer (R-NE) and Reps. Bera (D-CA) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA)
7. **Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act (S. 2425/H.R. 2981)** – Introduced by Sen. Reed (D-RI) and Reps. Katko (R-NY), Beyer (D-VA), and Napolitano (D-CA) -- S. 2425 was placed on the Senate Calendar on September 21, 2021
8. **Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act (H.R. 2862)** – Introduced by Reps. Beyer (D-VA) and Kinzinger (R-IL)
9. **Suicide Prevention Act (H.R. 2955)** – Introduced by Reps. Stewart (R-UT) and Matsui (D-CA)

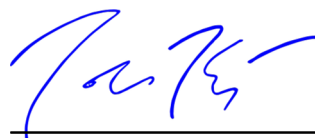
We truly appreciate your continued commitment to address the mental health needs of all Americans during this unprecedented crisis.

Sincerely,



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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



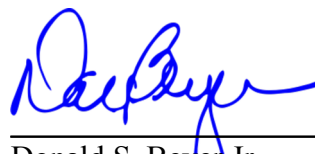
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John Katko  
Member of Congress



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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress



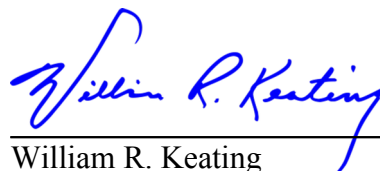
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



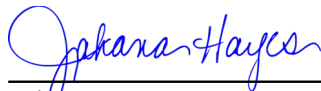
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Chris Stewart  
Member of Congress



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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



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Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



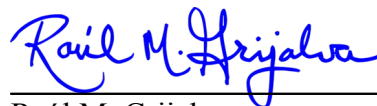
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Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



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Susie Lee  
Member of Congress



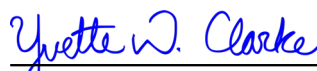
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



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Karen Bass  
Member of Congress



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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress



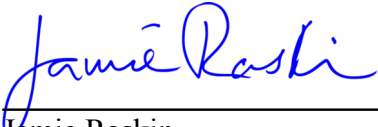
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Cynthia Axne  
Member of Congress



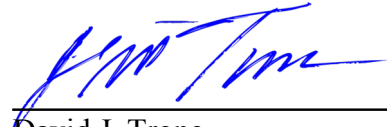
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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



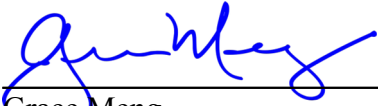
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



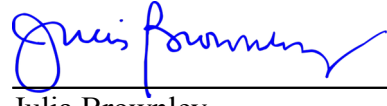
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David J. Trone  
Member of Congress



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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



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Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



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Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



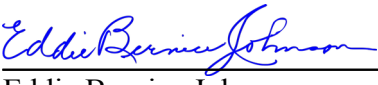
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Raul Ruiz  
Member of Congress



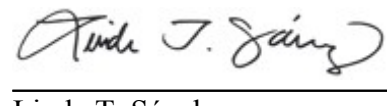
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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



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Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress



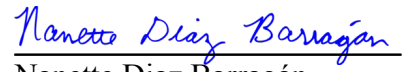
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Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



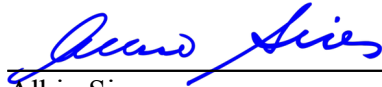
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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



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Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



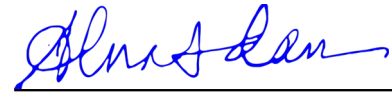
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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



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Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
Member of Congress



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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress