

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis U.S. House of Representatives 2227 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515 The Honorable Eliot Engel U.S. House of Representatives 2426 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Bilirakis and Engel,

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumer, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders, is writing to express our support for H.R. 4861, the Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act of 2019, which would help address the growing epidemic of suicides in the United States by improving the identification, assessment and treatment of patients in emergency departments who are at high risk of suicide.

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States, having claimed more than 47,000 lives in 2017 alone. Moreover, from 2001 to 2017, the suicide rate in the U.S. increased by an alarming 31 percent, according to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Emergency departments in our nation's hospitals often provide care for people at-risk for suicide, such as patients with serious mental illness, substance use disorders or chronic pain. Yet, up to 70 percent who leave the emergency department after a suicide attempt never attend their initial outpatient appointment.

Further, a 2016 study estimated that suicidal ideation is present in 11 percent of emergency department patients, but only 3 percent are identified by screening.

The Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act of 2019 takes important steps to assist hospitals to enhance their care for patients at high risk for suicide. This bill would establish a new grant program to assist emergency departments in implementing policies and procedures for the identification, assessment and treatment of individuals at high-risk of suicide, as well as developing best practices for discharge procedures and follow-up care for those patients.

In addition, funding under the program can be used for the hiring of additional behavioral health professionals and to provide better training for emergency health care providers on identifying and treating high-risk patients. Hospitals can also use the grants for telehealth services for the purpose of increasing access to evidence-based treatments.

As organizations leading the fight to improve access to mental health care, MHLG would like to thank you for your leadership on this issue and for introducing this important legislation that enhances the ability of hospitals to identify and treat patients at risk of suicide.

Sincerely,
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Dance Therapy Association



American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Group Psychotherapy Association

**American Nurses Association** 

American Occupational Therapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychiatric Nurses Association

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

**Clinical Social Work Association** 

College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)

Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Council on Social Work Education

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

**Emergency Nurses Association** 

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

International OCD Foundation

The Jewish Federations of North America

The Kennedy Forum

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health (NACBH)

National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of Rural Mental Health (NARMH)

**National Association of Social Workers** 

**National Eating Disorders Association** 

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

National Register of Health Service Psychologists

Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America

School Social Work Association of America

**SMART Recovery** 

**Treatment Communities of America** 

The Trevor Project

CC: Rep. Frank Pallone

Rep. Greg Walden