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August 12, 2020

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The Honorable Deb Fischer
454 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tina Smith
720 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Fischer and Smith:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty association representing over 38,800 psychiatric physicians, I write in support of the *Achieving Thorough Transparency & Accessibility for Information Navigation (ATTAIN) on Mental Health Act, S.4486*. This important legislation would enable communities across the country to better access federal funding to support expanded access to mental health treatment. Expansion of our mental health treatment capacity is critical, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The APA appreciates your efforts to establish a collaborative, web-based Mental Health dashboard that allows potential applicants from all over the country to gain a better understanding of the eligibility requirements and grant status information needed to receive federal grant funding to support mental health programs. We believe that this is a good first step that makes much needed federal mental health resources more accessible to communities across the country.

We support your legislation and believe the effort could be made even stronger by the addition of substance use disorders (SUDs) to the dashboard, because of the high prevalence of co-occurring mental illness and SUDs. The most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health¹ (NSDUH) survey found that 47.6 million Americans 18 and older have mental illnesses. The linkages between substance use disorders and co-occurring mental illness are significant. The survey found that over 9.2 million people aged 18 and older suffer from both SUDs and mental illnesses.

Patients with mental illnesses are also more prone to have chronic physical illnesses as well. The prevalence of comorbidities increases the need for more integrated care and for health care professionals and communities to be aware of the risk and impact of SUDs. Because of the clear link between mental illness and SUDs, we believe that future users of the Mental Health Dashboard would be best served if the database aggregated information on both available mental health and SUD federal grants.

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/> on 2/26/20

We hope that as the legislation moves through the legislative process, you will keep this feedback in mind. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that federal mental health and SUD resources make into our communities to help more patients in need. Thank you for your leadership in introducing S. 4486. Please let us know how we can aid your efforts to advance this legislation. If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Greenhalgh at mgreenhalgh@psych.org or at 202.459.9708.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Saul Levin" with "MD, MPA" written in smaller letters to the right. There is a horizontal line under the name "Levin".

Saul Levin, MD, MPA, FRCP-E, FRCPsych