

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy:

As members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), we congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of Health and Human Services. MHLG is a coalition of national organizations representing people with mental health conditions and substance use disorders (MH/SUD), family members and caregivers, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders. MHLG is committed to strengthening Americans' access to MH/SUD care. As trusted leaders in the behavioral health field, our more than 70 member organizations are dedicated to elevating the national conversation around behavioral health, and we hope MHLG can serve as a resource to you during your leadership.

We share your concern for America's health crises and chronic disease, especially as it impacts our nation's children. Our organizations have continued to raise the alarm about our nation's ongoing mental health crisis, including its devastating impact on youth, and the ongoing overdose and suicide epidemics. We agree that several of the issues that the newly established Make American Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission aims to address may benefit from greater consideration and study, and we strongly urge you to include the voices of individuals and families who have experienced these conditions in the Commission's work. The MHLG has working groups in key areas that can be helpful to furthering the goals of improving America's behavioral health, including integrated behavioral healthcare in primary and pediatric care, child and adolescent mental health, peer support, workforce development, parity, veterans and military mental health, and suicide and crisis care. Given the critical relationship between physical and behavioral health, we were pleased to see behavioral health as part of the Commission's work and look forward to further conversations about how we can best participate as the work moves forward.

In all of our work, we emphasize that for people with MH/SUDs, successful treatment and recovery looks different for different people. Many of the people who we advocate for depend on medication for opioid use disorder and/or to manage the symptoms of mental health conditions which directly impact their ability to keep stable housing, hold a job, and live fulfilling lives. Our organizations would be happy to connect your team with parents, young people and adults with MH/SUDs, and health care providers and researchers – all of whom could speak about their experiences to help the Commission understand the full range of risks

and benefits of different treatment modalities. These voices are a critical part of and would be a tremendous asset to the important conversation you have started.

We look forward to working with you during your time at HHS to pursue the common goal of improving the mental health and wellbeing of all Americans. We encourage you to refer to the MHLG About Us (<https://www.mhlg.org/about-us/>) section of our website for a list of our Board of Directors and Committee and Workgroup leaders. Please contact Hannah Wesolowski at hwesolowski@nami.org to discuss the best ways to identify participants, and Laurel Stine at lstine@afsp.org to connect with the MHLG.

Sincerely,

National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI)
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Nursing
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
Employee Assistance Professionals Association
Fountain House
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice
Huntington's Disease Society of America
International OCD Foundation
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mental Health America
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of School Psychologists
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Federation of Families
National League for Nursing

National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
Postpartum Support International
PsiAN Action Network
REDC Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
SMART Recovery
The Kennedy Forum
Treatment Communities of America
Western Youth Services
Youth Villages