

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Coalition of leading mental health organizations support bipartisan slate of mental health bills in the U.S. House**

**WASHINGTON, D.C., MAY 12, 2021**— A coalition of mental health and wellness organizations including the [Eating Disorders Coalition](#), [Inseparable](#), [The Kennedy Forum](#), [Mental Health America](#), [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), and [Well Being Trust](#), applaud a slate of bipartisan mental health bills that passed in the U.S. House with 349-74 votes on Wednesday. The groups now urge the Senate to take action on the measures, stating:

“We, as leading mental health organizations in the nation, support this vital package of bipartisan mental health bills. Now, more than ever, lawmakers need to take measures to ensure the mental well-being of all Americans, who for too long have languished in a system that puts mental health on the back burner. The bills will work toward suicide prevention, supporting youth in need of mental health support, establishing equity in mental health services, and more. With the Covid-19 pandemic taking a heavy toll on Americans’ emotional health, the passage of these bills is timely. These bills are strongly bipartisan, showing that lawmakers are willing to work across the aisle to improve mental health services. This is an issue that impacts us all - no matter our political ideology or party. We urge the Senate to take up these measures during May, which has been designated Mental Health Month.”

The following descriptions are excerpts from a letter to Congress by the Mental Health Liaison Group, a coalition of national organizations representing mental health and addiction providers, seeking quick passage of these bills:

**Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act (H.R.1475)**

In the 116th Congress, the House passed the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act, introduced by Reps. Watson Coleman (D-NJ) and Katko (R-NY). This bill is the first comprehensive federal legislation to address increasing suicide rates and mental health disorders among Black youth. The bill would provide grants for culturally appropriate mental health services in schools and community settings; increase funding for research into mental health disparities in youth of color; increase support for diversifying the behavioral health workforce; and establish a commission to examine the effects of smartphones and social media on adolescent mental health.

**The STANDUP Act (H.R. 586)**

Introduced by Reps. Peters (D-CA) and Bilirakis (R-FL), the STANDUP Act of 2021 is identical to the STANDUP Act which passed the House in the 116th Congress. It provides resources and technical assistance to States, Tribes, and schools on student suicide prevention awareness and training, and requires SAMHSA Project AWARE grantees to implement school policies for student suicide prevention awareness and training. Equipping our schools with evidence-based suicide prevention policies will allow all stakeholders in the school community, including

students, to be the eyes and ears and to speak up when they see or hear warning signs from a peer/student.

### **Mental Health Services for Students Act (H.R.721)**

Introduced by Reps. Napolitano (D-CA) and Katko (R-NY), the Mental Health Services for Students Act, provides funding for public schools across the country to partner with local mental health professionals to establish on-site mental health care services for students. The legislation would provide \$130,000,000 in competitive grants of up to \$2 million each through SAMHSA's Project AWARE to give students access to the licensed mental health professionals they need to treat their mental health conditions.

### **Emergency Department Act (H.R.1324)**

The bipartisan Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act passed the House in the 116th Congress and was reintroduced this Congress by Reps. Bilirakis (R-FL) and Soto (D-FL). Thirty-nine percent of patients visiting an Emergency Department following a suicide attempt will go on to reattempt suicide within a year. This legislation will provide training to emergency health care providers, establish policies to improve identification and treatment of individuals at high risk, employ additional behavioral health professionals, and improve access to care for patients.

### **Mental Health Access from the Emergency Department Act (H.R.1205)**

This Improving Mental Health Access from the Emergency Department Act legislation, introduced by Rep. Ruiz (D-CA) and passed by the House in the 116th Congress, provides resources for emergency departments to adopt more collaborative and connected care models and deploy new technology to better connect patients with appropriate resources in their communities. This legislation recognizes that needs vary by patient, provider, and community and allows emergency departments to design the solutions that will best work for them.

### **Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act (H.R.1480)**

The Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act, introduced by Rep. Bera (D-CA) and passed by the House in the 116th Congress, would improve the detection, prevention, and treatment of mental health issues among public safety officers. This legislation would better identify first responder suicide rates, risk factors, and interventions, and develop best practices on the prevention and treatment of posttraumatic stress among first responders.

### **Suicide Prevention Act (H.R.2955)**

The Suicide Prevention Act, introduced by Reps. Stewart (R-UT) and Matsui (D-CA), would enhance data collection and sharing and provide funding for suicide prevention programs to train and equip emergency department personnel in suicide prevention strategies. This legislation would enable real-time surveillance of self-harm to inform public health strategies and support emergency departments to screen at-risk patients, refer appropriate follow-up care, and develop and deploy best practices for health care providers.

### **Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act (H.R.2981)**

The Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act, introduced by Reps. Katko (R-NY), Beyer (D-VA) and Napolitano (D-CA), would support an increased authorization for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline to ensure high-quality crisis service delivery. This legislation would require increased coordination and data sharing and provide more funding to support community-based crisis service delivery.

**The Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act (H.R. 2862)**

The Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act introduced by Reps. Beyer (D-VA) and Kinzinger (R-IL) would establish a national educational campaign to raise awareness for a three-digit suicide lifeline phone number (988), suicide prevention resources, and more effective discourse on how to prevent suicide. Too often individuals in need of help do not know where to turn or fear seeking help due to social stigma.

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