

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 8, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

We are grateful to the Committee for considering this vital bipartisan legislation at its legislative hearing in June, and for including H.R. 945 in its markup on September 9.

As we wrote to the Committee in June, seniors face a broad range of mental health challenges, including Alzheimer's disease, dementia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression. While many of these challenges can be overcome with appropriate treatment, far too many seniors suffer from a lack of access to qualified mental health professionals – an obstacle exacerbated by the constraints of COVID-19.

As you are aware, Medicare does not currently allow beneficiaries to receive care from mental health counselors (MHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs), even though MHCs and MFTs are required to obtain education and training equivalent to that of clinical social workers. By permitting Medicare beneficiaries to access MHC and MFT services, Congress can ensure that millions more seniors receive quality mental health care from qualified professionals at a vital time.

Sadly, the ongoing pandemic has not only made it more difficult for seniors to seek needed treatment: it has also forced millions of seniors to live in unusually isolated conditions, which can lead to more frequent and more severe mental health challenges. Particularly with these conditions in mind, we urge the Committee to favorably report out H.R. 945 at its markup on September 9.

Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,



MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress



JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress