



April 1, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Energy and Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Inseparable applauds the House Energy and Commerce Committee for continuing to consider thoughtful and bipartisan reforms to the mental health services system in America. Inseparable is growing coalition of people from across the country who share the common goal of improving mental health care policy. Inseparable was founded amid a global pandemic that has only magnified and exacerbated our country's ongoing mental health crisis. We share a simple but mighty vision: an America where mental health, no longer an afterthought, helps our country to heal and thrive. For too long, mental health care has been viewed as separate from physical health care, which has led to today's current fragmented system to treating mental health conditions. At Inseparable, we believe that our mental and physical well-being are not separable, and mental health care is health care, period.

Earlier this Congress, the House Energy and Commerce Committee advanced and the House passed the bipartisan Mental Health Services for Students Act and the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Services Act. We strongly support the Committee's efforts to move this legislation forward and hope the Senate will send them to the President for his signature.

Inseparable strongly supports several of the bills your Committee will consider at the legislative hearing on April 5, 2022. We believe there are many problems in the mental health realm that need to be addressed, but for us, three urgent priorities are at the top of the list:

- Eliminating the gap between the number of people who need mental health care and the people who get help.
- Ensuring every school has services to provide for the mental health and well-being of all students
- Ending the criminalization of mental illness and expanding crisis response.

Eliminating the Treatment Gap

Fewer than half of the people in America who need treatment for mental health issues receive the care they need. We estimate this means that more than 26 million Americans are left untreated.

Inseparable strongly supports H.R. 4944, the *Helping Kids Cope Act*, introduced by Representatives Blunt Rochester (D-DE) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA). Increasing access to care includes integrating mental health into primary care, but many primary care facilities struggle to afford the necessary resources to expand their practice. The *Helping Kids Cope Act* will enhance access to and provide training in pediatric behavioral health care so that children can receive mental health care at their doctor's office.

Inseparable also supports H.R. 7076, the *Supporting Children's Mental Health Care Access Act*, introduced by Representatives Schrier (D-WA) and Miller-Meeks (R-IA). This legislation would reauthorize important pediatric telehealth access programs, increasing access for children to receive mental health services at home.

Comprehensive School Mental Health

There is no doubt that the pandemic has exacerbated an existing mental health crisis for children, increasing social isolation and putting children at increased risk with less access to support. In 2020, there was a 24 percent increase in emergency room visits for mental health reasons for kids aged 5 through 11 and more than a 30 percent increase for kids between ages 12 and 17. We need urgent investments in prevention and early intervention to give every child in America a chance for a hopeful, healthy future.

Inseparable strongly supports H.R. 7236, the *Strengthen Kids Mental Health Now Act*, introduced by Representatives Eshoo (D-CA), Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Blunt Rochester (D-DE). This legislation would bolster infrastructure for pediatric mental health services and extend support to schools to provide mental health services to students. We are particularly supportive of the provisions that would establish grants to support pediatric behavioral health care integration for eligible entities including school-based health centers. Inseparable is also pleased the Committee is considering H.R. 7233, the *KIDS CARES Act*, introduced by Representatives Hudson (R-NC) and Kuster (D-NH), which would require essential guidance to schools and school-based health centers to streamline school mental health.

Strengthening Crisis Response

Mental health and addiction are some of the only medical conditions that we routinely criminalize in the United States. Inseparable prioritizes treatment over punishment for people with mental illness and is pleased the Committee will be considering legislation to strengthen our country's crisis response systems. Inseparable strongly supports H.R. 7232, the *9-8-8 and Parity Assistance Act*, introduced by Representative Cárdenas (D-CA). This legislation would take important steps toward implementing the 9-8-8 national hotline to ensure timely, 24-7 response to callers anywhere in the country and connect them with community-based crisis response. Inseparable also supports H.R. 7254, the *Mental Health Justice and Parity Act*, introduced by Representatives Porter (D-CA) and Dingell (D-MI). This legislation would provide further support community-based crisis response to ensure people in the midst of a mental health crisis are getting the help they need.

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Finally, while not on the agenda for today's hearing, Inseparable strongly supports H.R. 5611, the *Behavioral Health Crisis Services Expansion Act*, which would ensure that Medicare, Medicaid, Affordable Care Act health plans, employer-sponsored coverage, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program and VA and TRICARE cover behavioral health crisis response services. Inseparable hopes the Committee will include this important legislation in any package because insurance coverage is vital to supporting a crisis response system that can ensure that the worst day of someone's life doesn't stop them from living their best possible life.

Inseparable is also pleased the Committee is considering H.R. 7248, the Continuing Systems of Care for Children Act, introduced by Representatives Joyce (R-PA), Sarbanes (D-MD), Gimenez (R-FL), and Underwood (D-IL); H.R. 7241, the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant Reauthorization Act, introduced by Representatives Crenshaw (R-TX), Butterfield (D-NC), Garcia (R-CA), and Luria (D-VA); and H.R. 7237, the *REACHING Improved Mental Health Outcomes for Patients Act*, introduced by Representatives Griffith (R-VA), Tenney (R-NY), Davids (D-KS), and Craig (D-MN).

Inseparable thanks the Committee again for considering a strong slate of bills that will improve outcomes for people experiencing mental health issues. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee as it crafts a legislative package that will transform how mental health services are furnished in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.