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Representative Frank Pallone
Chair, House Committee on Energy and
Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Anna G. Eshoo
Chair, Health Subcommittee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy
and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Brett Guthrie
Ranking Member, Health Subcommittee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

May 10, 2022

Dear Chair Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chair Eshoo, and Ranking Member Guthrie,

Community Catalyst appreciates this opportunity to respond to the House Committee on Energy and Commerce's ***H.R. 7666 Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022*** released Friday May 6, 2022. Thank you for taking these initial steps forward in developing comprehensive, bipartisan legislation to improve mental health and substance use disorders services across the country. We support H.R. 7666 and offer additional recommendations to make it even stronger.

[Community Catalyst](http://www.communitycatalyst.org) is a leading non-profit national health advocacy organization dedicated to advancing a movement for health equity and justice. We partner with local, state and national advocates to leverage and build power so all people can influence decisions that affect their health. Our Program on Substance Use Disorders and Justice-Involved Populations works to advance racial justice by centering community needs, particularly of those most marginalized, and advocating for policy and practice changes to ensure addiction is treated as a health issue and not a criminal one.

We are pleased to see H.R. 7666 include provisions that reauthorize essential block grants and continue effective programs and initiatives. These will help our nation address the growing mental health and substance use challenges in all our communities. We also strongly support the proposed expansion of the reach of the federal requirement for parity in mental health and substance use services by eliminating the opt-out for non-federal governmental health plans.

To further strengthen H.R.7666 we recommend the Committee consider adding the following to the legislative package:

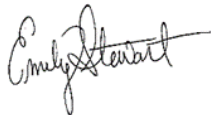
- [H.R.7116 - 9-8-8 Implementation Act of 2022](#), which would address 9-8-8 implementation more comprehensively. To ensure the successful 9-8-8 roll out we also recommend increasing funding to states for targeted outreach, education, and implementation, especially among marginalized

communities so that all people, especially in areas of highest need, can access 9-8-8 and life-saving crisis services.

- [H.R.4897 - Support Recovery from Addiction Act of 2021](#), which would require a 10 percent set-aside for recovery services. We also recommend a 10 percent increase in Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services Block Grant funds to address the nation's [growing overdose crisis](#). Investing in community based non-clinical services including recovery housing, recovery community organizations, peer recovery services, and other wraparound services is critical to helping people with addiction access the health and community supports they need to stay healthy.
- [H.R.7233 - Keeping Incarceration Discharges Streamlined for Children and Accommodating Resources in Education Act](#), which would require updated Medicaid guidance to states on billing for health services in schools and school-based health centers. Providing behavioral health services in schools is key to addressing our nation's [youth mental health crisis](#) and helps to reach students of color who may not have access in the community. Educating states about the existing opportunities to use Medicaid money for services in schools is an important step in growing these services.
- [H.R.955 - Medicaid Reentry Act of 2021](#), which would authorize Medicaid coverage of health services in the 30 days before an individual is released from incarceration. It is essential for people upon release to have uninterrupted access to the health services they need to stay alive and stay healthy; if more people were able to have continuous health coverage and access to life-saving addiction treatment through Medicaid during reentry, fewer people would die.
- [H.R.1384 - Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act of 2021](#), which would improve access to opioid use disorder treatment. Current restrictions on buprenorphine—an effective medication for opioid use disorder—require physicians to obtain a specific waiver in order to prescribe buprenorphine for addiction treatment. The MAT Act will remove the waiver requirement, making it easier for doctors to prescribe buprenorphine, help [reduce racial inequities](#) in treatment, and make it easier for all patients to access this life-saving medication.
- In order to meet the needs of the youth mental health crisis, we also recommend increased funding for evidence informed, non-punitive substance use prevention and early intervention services for youth.

Thank you for considering these recommendations, and for your commitment to improving mental health and substance use disorders services. Please let us know how we can help you further. Alice Dembner, adembner@communitycatalyst.org, who heads our Program on Substance Use Disorders and Justice-Involved Populations, is our lead on this issue.

Sincerely,



Emily Stewart
Executive Director
Community Catalyst