



November 18, 2019

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis  
2227 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Eliot Engel  
2426 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressmen Bilirakis and Engel:

On behalf of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and our 40,000 members, I would like to express our support for the “Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act” (H.R. 4861).

As emergency physicians, we often treat patients who are in a suicidal crisis and we frequently provide care for people with other risk factors for suicide, such as serious mental illness, substance use disorders, and chronic pain. These patient interactions can be important intervention opportunities.

According to the latest data released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide rates continue to rise in the United States, with a rate in 2017 that was 33 percent higher than in 1999. We also know that the risk of a suicide attempt or death is highest within 30 days of discharge from an emergency department or inpatient psychiatric unit.

For these reasons, we believe your legislation and the grants established in the bill would provide critical resources to emergency physicians and other emergency department health care professionals to help identify, assess, and treat patients at-risk of suicide. These voluntary grants could also be used to help facilitate care coordination and referrals to evidence-based, community treatment centers. ACEP believes a comprehensive approach to identifying and treating at-risk patients will save lives and your legislation would play a vital role in helping us achieve those outcomes for our patients.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue and we look forward to working with you to enact this valuable legislation.

Sincerely,

William P. Jaquis, MD, MSHQS, FACEP  
ACEP President

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