

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare



Access. Care. Recovery.

26 June 2020

U.S. Rep. Bob Latta
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Latta:

The National Association for Behavioral Healthcare (NABH) represents healthcare systems that provide a wide range of behavioral healthcare services, including inpatient, residential, partial hospitalization/intensive outpatient, and outpatient care. Our members appreciate very much the flexibilities and resources that Congress and the federal agencies have developed and implemented quickly to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. These actions have enabled us to increase greatly telehealth services and establish crucial protocols to protect our patients and staff.

Epidemics, even those of lesser magnitude than the Covid-19 pandemic, cause significant detrimental effects on mental health and substance use among affected populations often for years following an outbreak.ⁱ Recent polls have found that half or more of Americans say the coronavirus pandemic is affecting their mental health with many reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression with high degrees of distress.ⁱⁱ

Behavioral health conditions were already taking an increasing and deadly toll on the U.S. population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported recently that between 1999 and 2018, the rate of suicides in the United States rose by 35%ⁱⁱⁱ to the highest age-adjusted rates since 1941.^{iv} Reports of exponential increases in calls to mental health crisis hotlines at the federal level and in major cities also indicate a looming behavioral health crisis.^v Social distancing and isolation can worsen the feelings of anxiety that the pandemic has generated. In addition, we know economic downturns, such as the one America is experiencing now, are associated with higher rates of suicide.^{vi}

Furthermore, the opioid crisis continues to devastate families and communities nationwide. Although the overall overdose rate declined slightly in 2018, the number of people dying from overdoses of synthetic opioids, cocaine, and psychostimulants continues to increase at an alarming pace.^{vii} The risk of substance use disorders (SUD) increases during stressful times,^{viii} and there are widespread reports of increased alcohol and drug sales during the current pandemic as well as increased opioid overdoses^{ix}

We are concerned about the welfare of our members' patients and the effect the Covid-19 pandemic is having on healthcare workers and first responders. History has taught us that this type of crisis will have delayed, although lethal, effects. Healthcare providers, particularly emergency room physicians and female physicians, are at heightened risk of suicide.^x First responders, including emergency services personnel, also have increased rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicide.^{xi}

For these reasons and more, we are grateful that you are sponsoring H.R. 7147, the *Creating Resources to Improve Situations of Inherent Severity Act* (CRISIS Act), and we are proud to support it.

We are especially pleased to see this legislation would boost the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Mental Health Block Grants by \$35.5 million per year for fiscal years 2021 and 2022. There has never been a greater time for effective mental health and addiction treatment services, and the CRISIS Act recognizes that.

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Our team is eager to help you and your staff in any way we can to better understand how our members use federal funding to establish, implement, and improve behavioral healthcare services for the millions of Americans who require treatment.

Please contact me directly at shawn@nabh.org, or by phone at 202.393.6700, ext. 100, if you have questions or would like more information.

Thank you for all you do to improve behavioral healthcare services in the United States.

Sincerely,

Shawn Coughlin
President and CEO

About NABH

The National Association for Behavioral Healthcare (NABH) advocates for behavioral healthcare and represents provider systems that treat children, adolescents, adults, and older adults with mental health and substance use disorders in inpatient behavioral healthcare hospitals and units, residential treatment facilities, partial hospitalization and intensive outpatient programs, medication assisted treatment centers, specialty behavioral healthcare programs, and recovery support services in nearly all 50 states. The association was founded in 1933.

ⁱ Laura Hawryluck, Wayne L. Gold, Susan Robinson, "SARS Control and Psychological Effects of Quarantine, Toronto, Canada", *Emerg Infect Dis*, July 2004, vol.10 no.7, 1206–1212; Sara Reardon, "Ebola's mental-health wounds linger in Africa: health-care workers struggle to help people who have been traumatized by the epidemic", *Nature*, vol. 519, no. 7541, 2015, p. 13; Emily Goldmann and Sandro Galea, "Mental health consequences of disasters," *Ann Rev Public Health*, Volume 35, pp. 169–83, 2014, available [online](#).

ⁱⁱ Kaiser Family Foundation, "Health Tracking Poll – Early April 2020: The Impact of Coronavirus on Life in America", published [online](#) April 2, 2020; Erica Hutchins Coe, Kana Enomoto, "Returning to Resilience: the Impact of Covid-19 on mental health and substance use", published [online](#) by McKinsey and Company, April 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Holly Hedegaard, Sally C. Curtin, Margaret Warner, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief, "Increase in Suicide Mortality in the United States, 1999-2018", , April 2020, available [online](#).

^{iv} Mark A. Reger, Ian H. Stanley, Thomas E. Joiner, "Suicide Mortality and Coronavirus Disease 2019 – A Perfect Storm?", *JAMA Psychiatry*, Published [on-line](#) on April 10, 2020.

^v William Wan, "The coronavirus pandemic is pushing America into a mental health crisis", [Washington Post](#), May 4, 2020.

^{vi} Mayowa Oyesanya, Javier Lopez-Morinigo, Rina Dutta, "Systematic review of suicide in economic recession", *World J Psychiatry*, vol. 5, no. 2, 243-54, June 22, 2015, available [online](#).

^{vii} Holly Hedegaard, Arialdi M. Minino, Margaret Warner, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief, "Drug Overdose Deaths in the United States, 1999-2018", January 2020, available [online](#).

^{viii} Nora D. Volkow, "Collision of the COVID-19 and addiction epidemics", *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Published online April 2, 2020.

^{ix} Associated Press, "U.S. online alcohol sales jump 243% during coronavirus pandemic" April 2, 2020, available [online](#); Mitchell Hartman, Marketplace, "Pot sales on the rise in some states with people home due to Covid-19", April 20, 2020, available [online](#).

^x Frederic Duthel, Claire Aubert, Bruno Pereira, et al, "Suicide among physicians and health-care workers: a systematic review and meta-analysis", *PLoS One*, v. 14, no.112, e0226361, published [online](#) 2019 Dec. 12.

^{xi} Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Disaster Technical Assistance Center, Supplemental Research Bulletin, "First Responders: Behavioral Health Concerns, Emergency Response, and Trauma", May 2019, available [online](#).