

Good Afternoon,

I am reaching out on behalf of the AAFP to share our support for the *Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act* ([H.R. 7666](#)) in advance of tomorrow's Health Subcommittee mark-up.

Improving mental health care remains a top priority for the AAFP and family physicians, and it will be one of the points of focus for our upcoming fly-in on May 24th.

Last month we [offered feedback](#) on the Committee's legislative hearing: "Communities in Need: Legislation to Support Mental Health and Well-Being," and we are especially glad to see several of the bills and concepts that we supported were included in the *Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act*:

Title I: Mental Health and Crisis Care Needs

- Subtitle A – **The AAFP [endorsed](#) the 9-8-8 Implementation Act and supports the creation and funding of a new Behavioral Health Crisis Coordinating Office.** Given that primary care physicians are uniquely tuned-in to the health needs of their communities, the AAFP is glad that this legislation directs HHS to coordinate with them in the establishment of standards for a behavioral health crisis continuum of care.
- Subtitle B – Family physicians care for patients before, during, and after pregnancy and see firsthand the harms of untreated mental health and substance use issues. The AAFP has championed the Momnibus as part of our advocacy efforts to improve maternal mortality and reduce maternal health disparities, and **we support increased investments into behavioral health care for pregnant and postpartum patients.** The Into the Light Act provisions in H.R. 7666 would scale up state programs that provide critical screening and treatment services.
- Subtitle E – **the AAFP supports the reauthorization of the Community Mental Health Services block grant** and has called for robust funding for federal programs that improve access to mental health care and SUD treatment and promote greater coordination across the health care system.

Title II: Substance Use Disorder Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services

- Subtitle E – **the AAFP supports legislation to remove barriers to evidence-based opioid use disorder treatment.**

Title III: Access to Mental Health Care and Coverage

- Subtitle A – The AAFP [endorsed](#) the *Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner Act* (H.R. 5218) which would provide funding to help family physicians implement the collaborative care model (CoCM) into their practices and test new models of behavioral health integration. Whereas this provision in H.R. 7666 would expand the scope of SAMHSA's Primary and Behavioral Health Care Integration grant program to provide dedicated funding to states to increase implementation of the COCM model. The AAFP supports the goal of this provision but is concerned that funding states as opposed to making funding directly available to providers

may be a barriers to physicians receiving the targeted funding in a timely and equitable manner. We are also concerned that the targeted CoCM grant amounts for primary care practices are too low and could disadvantage those providers relative to FQHCs. However, **the Academy is appreciative of legislation to provide funding and technical assistance for behavioral health integration into primary care.** This provision is a first step towards supporting widespread practice transformation and recognizing the value of CoCM and other models of behavioral health integration.

Title IV: Children and Youth

- Subtitle A – **The AAFP [endorsed](#) the Supporting Children’s Mental Health Access Act and has called for the reauthorization and expansion of the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access program.** This critical program provides pediatric primary care clinicians, including family physicians, with telehealth consultations by child mental health teams. This program has successfully expanded access to pediatric mental health care in states with active programs. Extending and expanding this program is important to ensuring children have timely access to behavioral health care.

We thank Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member McMorris Rogers for their leadership introducing this bipartisan legislative package. The *Restoring Hope for Mental Health and Well-Being Act* reauthorizes critical federal programs and invests in initiatives that will improve access to comprehensive behavioral health care. The AAFP appreciates the Energy and Commerce Committee’s ongoing work to address our nation’s behavioral health crisis, and we look forward to working with you to ensure passage of this bill as well as future legislation to achieve our shared goals.

Please let me know if you have any questions or how we can best support your efforts.

Best,
Erica



Erica Cischke, MPH
Director, Legislative and Regulatory Affairs
American Academy of Family Physicians
Office: 202-655-4912 | Cell: 202-924-0005
Email: ecischke@aafp.org