



May 10, 2022

The Honorable Frank Pallone
U.S. House of Representatives
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
U.S. House of Representatives
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: H.R. 7666, the Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022

Dear Representatives Pallone and McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of Inseparable, I would like to thank you for your bipartisan leadership on mental health policy and to express our gratitude for the Mental Health and Well-Being Act of 2022. Inseparable is pleased to see multiple provisions that align with our three policy goals: closing the treatment gap by improving coverage and access to care, improving crisis response and decriminalizing mental health conditions, and promoting prevention and early intervention.

We would like to share our strong support for Section 321, which would end opt-outs from federal parity requirements for non-federal governmental health plans. Ending the opt-out will benefit frontline workers and families who are covered by the .5% of plans that have opted out of providing fair and equivalent health coverage. In a similar vein, we urge you to include language that supports a much-needed state parity implementation grant program to assist states in ensuring that health plans are complying with parity law and providing the coverage and access to mental health and substance use services that people need and deserve.

We strongly support the 5% crisis set-aside in the Community Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) in Section 141. We also very much appreciate the language that specifies, that with respect to this set-aside, section 1912(b)(1)(A)(vi) shall not apply. This provides needed flexibility to serve people who may have severe mental health conditions or be in crisis but have not been screened or diagnosed. However, we are hopeful that the Committee will consider increasing the MHBG to \$1 billion. With respect to enhancing crisis care, we also appreciate the increased authorization for Jail Diversion Program and Grants in Section 216 and the Crisis Response Partnership Pilot in Section 122. These important programs will allow communities to establish or expand programs that divert adults with a serious mental illness or a co-occurring disorder from the criminal justice system and to expand mobile crisis response services that can keep people from encountering law enforcement in the first place. We also strongly support the language to establish a Behavioral Health Crisis Coordinating Office within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in Section 101. This provision will provide a needed foundation to develop a better response to mental health crises.

Reaching children and youth early is vital and, as a result, we appreciate the emphasis on prevention and early intervention. We strongly support the authorization for the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Grant Program in Section 401, including expansion of the program to emergency departments and schools. We also strongly support the authorization, in Section 402, for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and the authorization for Mental Health Awareness Training Grants. These programs

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make a real difference in the lives of children and youth and who are struggling with mental health challenges.

Finally, while not included in the package, Inseparable strongly supports H.R. 5611, the *Behavioral Health Crisis Services Expansion Act*, which would ensure that Americans who experience a mental health crisis are covered for behavioral health crisis services by their health plan, including Medicare, Medicaid, Affordable Care Act health plans, employer-sponsored coverage, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program and by the VA and TRICARE. Insurance coverage is essential to transforming how the United States responds to mental health crises and reduces the costly and dehumanizing criminalization of mental health. Inseparable hopes the Committee will consider this legislation as you continue to search for policy solutions to increase access to crisis care.

In light of the worsening crisis in mental health (including substance use and suicide), we commend the bipartisan leadership you are demonstrating and look forward to working with you to improve care for the millions of Americans whose lives are affected by mental health, substance use, and suicide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Founder and President