

July 31, 2019

The Honorable John Katko  
2457 Rayburn HOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Napolitano  
1610 Longworth HOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Katko and Napolitano:

The undersigned national organizations dedicated to strengthening Americans' access to mental health care write to extend our strong support for the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act of 2019 (H.R. 2431). This legislation is a vital step in addressing our nation's dire shortage of mental health professionals and reducing the unmet mental health treatment gap for Americans across the lifespan.

The prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders in the United States is alarming. According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, in the past year alone nearly one in five adults in the United States experienced a mental or behavioral health problem. In addition, data indicate approximately 21% of youth aged 13-18 experiences a severe mental disorder at some point in their life; for children aged 8-15, the estimate is 13%. Untreated mental health disorders can lead to a host of adverse consequences, including homelessness, academic failure, unemployment, contact with the criminal or juvenile justice system, and suicide. With approximately 105.7 million Americans currently living in federally-designated mental health professional shortage areas, it is paramount to provide access to timely, appropriate, and effective mental health treatment to help individuals with mental and behavioral health conditions obtain the services they need to thrive.

As you know, there is a severe shortage of mental health professionals across almost all specialties, particularly in rural areas. A 2016 report from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projected the supply of personnel in selected behavioral and mental health fields to be 250,000 workers short of the projected demand in 2025. We applaud your goal of building a robust mental and behavioral health workforce and the inclusion of more eligible mental health providers as part of this legislation. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to pass the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act of 2019.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Counseling Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Bazelon  
Centerstone  
Council on Social Work Education  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice  
International OCD Foundation  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
The Kennedy Forum  
Mental Health America  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability  
Directors  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Board of Certified Counselors  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Eating Disorders Association  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National League for Nursing  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health without Mental Health  
Postpartum Support International  
Schizophrenia And Related Disorders Alliance of America  
School-Based Health Alliance  
School Social Work Association of America  
Trust for America's Health