

June 17, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairman Pallone, and Ranking Member Walden,

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations committed to strengthening Americans' access to mental health and addiction care, we ask that you advance the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act (H.R.4194/S.2661), to designate "988" as the three-digit hotline number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and make mental health crisis services more readily available. **We urge you to bring the *National Suicide Hotline Designation Act* up for a vote under suspension for standalone passage. This bicameral, bipartisan legislation is urgently needed and, under your leadership, could save lives.**

We deeply appreciate the legislation's inclusion in the HEROES Act that passed the House of Representatives. As you know, the Senate passed S.2661 by Unanimous Consent on Wednesday, May 13th. We are writing because it is imperative that we move as quickly as possible to address our country's growing mental health and suicide crises now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

People living with mental health conditions are experiencing worsening symptoms and individuals may develop new mental health problems in response to fear, self-isolation, and physical distancing during the current crisis. The Kaiser Family Foundation recently conducted polls finding that a majority of Americans are experiencing worsening mental health due to the crisis and SAMHSA's disaster distress line increased its monthly volume by nearly 1,000% compared to April of 2019. We also know that our frontline healthcare workers are experiencing tremendous stress and trauma. The social, economic, and health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, now coupled with the trauma and stress of racism, police brutality, and subsequent unrest, have exacerbated recognized suicide risk factors in this unprecedented public crisis. Having a simple, 3-digit number is essential to meeting America's mental health needs during and after the crisis and implementation must move forward as quickly as possible given the scope of the mental health impact.

Thank you for all that you are doing to address the public's mental health needs during the COVID-19 crisis. We greatly appreciate your leadership during these challenging times and are ready to assist in responding to these major public health threats.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association of Suicidology
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Education Development Center
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International OCD Foundation
The Jewish Federations of North America
The Kennedy Forum
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Behavioral Healthcare
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Board for Certified Counselors
The National Council for Behavioral Health
National Eating Disorders Association
The National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Postpartum Support International
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
Schizophrenia And Related Disorders Alliance of America
School Social Work Association of America
SMART Recovery
Social Work Association of America
Tourette Association of America
The Trevor Project
Trust for America's Health