



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION**
SERVICES, INC.

November 6, 2023

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chair
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association Services, Inc. (APA Services), we are writing to express our strong support for your committee's November 2nd discussion draft of legislation to expand the mental health care workforce and services under Medicare and Medicaid. APA Services is the companion organization of the American Psychological Association, which is the nation's largest scientific and professional nonprofit organization representing the discipline and profession of psychology, as well as over 146,000 members and affiliates who are clinicians, researchers, educators, consultants, and students in psychological science.

We are grateful for the committee's work over the past few years to address the nation's behavioral health crisis. Individuals with mental health and substance use disorders have long suffered from inadequate access to treatment and the effects of the COVID pandemic have increased the urgency of closing this gap. Data collected by APA show the U.S. population experiencing extraordinarily high levels of stress and anxiety, with a quarter of U.S. adults reporting that they are too stressed to function.¹ And almost three out of four Americans reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of crises facing the world.² Practitioners are seeing increased workloads and longer waitlists, which have contributed to higher levels of burnout within the profession.³

We applaud the committee for including in the November 2nd discussion draft several important provisions which would improve access to mental health services and support psychologists and other mental health professionals:

- Expansion of eligibility for Medicare health professional shortage area bonus payments to psychologists and other practitioners furnishing mental health and substance use disorders;

¹ American Psychological Association. (October 2022). Stress in America: Concerned with the future, beset by inflation. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2022/concerned-future-inflation>.

² American Psychological Association. (March 2022). Stress in America: Money, Inflation, War Pile On to Nation Stuck in COVID-19 Survival Mode. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2022/march-2022-survival-mode>.

³ American Psychological Association. (November 2022). Psychologists struggle to meet demand amid mental health crisis, 2022 COVID-19 Practitioner Impact Survey. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/practitioner/2022-covid-psychologist-workload>.

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- Increased incentives for behavioral health integration within primary care, and the provision of technical assistance to primary care practices for the use of evidence-based models of integrated care including the Primary Care Behavioral Health (PCBH) model and the Collaborative Care Model (CoCM);
- Provisions to continue expanding access to mental health services provided via telehealth;
- Requirements that Medicare Advantage plans provide accurate, up-to-date directories of providers, protect enrollees from cost sharing for services furnished based on incorrect provider network information, and annually report on the accuracy of their provider directories;
- Requiring the development of guidance to state Medicaid and CHIP plans on increasing mental health and substance use disorder provider capacity, improving the availability of mental health and substance use disorder care for children and youth, and supporting behavioral health integration within primary care.

The draft legislation is a major step forward in closing the treatment gap, and we urge its approval by the committee. The Finance Committee's collective efforts to address the mental health crisis are inspiring, and we look forward to continuing to work with members on additional policies to improve access to care later in this Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Arthur C. Evans, Jr.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arthur C. Evans, Jr., PhD
Chief Executive Officer