

# APA ADVOCACY

## *Washington Update*

To view this email as a web page, click [here](#).

For more information and resources on COVID-19, visit [APA's webpage](#) for psychologists, health-care workers and the public.

*APA Advocacy Washington Update is a weekly newsletter that highlights how APA is working to advance the discipline and practice of psychology on Capitol Hill and beyond. Learn more about APA's [advocacy priorities](#) for 2020.*

## Requesting Better Data Collection and Reporting of COVID-19 Health Disparities



In a [letter](#) to President Trump, APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, has requested that the Department of Health and Human Services establish within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention a public-private partnership to coordinate with state and local public health authorities to collect, disaggregate and report on data related to COVID-19, specifically as it relates to underrepresented groups, to more effectively address this current pandemic and any future outbreaks. “Consistent data collection, including cross-agency data-sharing, analysis, and reporting are an essential public health function that is currently falling short,” wrote Evans. “APA strongly supports robust data collection efforts as they provide researchers and policymakers with rich information that can help us better understand and address the causes of the disproportionate impact of diseases.”

For more information, contact Aaron Bishop at [abishop@apa.org](mailto:abishop@apa.org) or Pat Kobor at [pkobor@apa.org](mailto:pkobor@apa.org).

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## **Bringing the Social and Behavioral Science of Pandemics to Capitol Hill**

APA hosted a [virtual briefing](#) for staff of the U.S. House of Representatives Science Committee to discuss a range of issues related to the pandemic, including threat perception, social context, science communication, aligning individual and collective interests, governance and leadership, and stress and coping. Leading the discussion were psychologist [Jay Van Bavel](#), PhD, and sociologist [Robb Willer](#), PhD, authors of the *Nature Human Genetics* review article "[Using Social and Behavioral Science to Support COVID-19 Pandemic Response](#)." Through such informal virtual briefings and panel discussions, the House is gathering valuable information to inform formal hearings when Congress reconvenes in person.

*For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at [gmumford@apa.org](mailto:gmumford@apa.org).*

## **Seeking to Prevent Disability-Based Discrimination in Coronavirus Cases**

APA joined a [letter](#) with over 400 organizations calling on the Department of Health and Human Services to issue additional guidance to hospitals to avoid disability discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite civil rights laws, health-care providers' conscious and unconscious biases toward people with disabilities can still play a discriminatory role when health-care decisions are made regarding COVID-19 treatments, such as [rationed care](#) due to medical supply shortages. The letter expresses concern that many hospitals' "crisis standard of care" plans that guide medical personnel on making such decisions are inadequate and need further clarification from the federal government.

*For more information, contact Ben Vonachen at [bvonachen@apa.org](mailto:bvonachen@apa.org).*

## **Supporting Psychologists in the Public Service Workforce**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act ([H.R. 748](#)) defers all federal student loan payments, including interest, from March 13, 2020 to Sept. 20, 2020. The suspended payments will continue to count toward borrowers' progress for loan forgiveness under federal programs such as Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), which provides a federal incentive to enter public service, including in mental and behavioral health fields.

Last month, APA also submitted [comments and feedback](#) to the Department of Education on its proposal to consolidate and streamline the application forms for the PSLF and Temporary Expanded PLSF (TEPSLF) programs. APA praised efforts to address implementation issues associated with both programs and urged the department to fully use all appropriated funds for TEPSLF and to more widely publicize the appeals process to resolve disputes for all PSLF and TEPSLF applicants.

Learn more about the PSLF program through [a series of videos](#) the Coalition to Preserve PSLF developed last fall.

*For more information, contact Kenneth Polishchuk at [kpolishchuk@apa.org](mailto:kpolishchuk@apa.org).*

## **Addressing Housing Instability and Homelessness Spurred by COVID-19**

APA signed onto a letter through the National Low-Income Housing Coalition seeking additional funding to address housing instability and homelessness during and after the COVID-19 crisis. The [letter](#) focuses on the most urgent remaining needs to address housing instability and homelessness, asking for \$11.5 billion for Emergency Solutions Grants to help service providers and

crisis managers on the front line; a moratorium on evictions and additional funding for emergency rental assistance; the expansion of vouchers and/or creation of a renters' tax credit; and more.

*For more information, contact Aaron Bishop at [abishop@apa.org](mailto:abishop@apa.org).*

### **Proposing Ways To Enhance the Behavioral and Social Science Infrastructure**

Several congressional committees are soliciting ideas in the context of the COVID-19 crisis about enhancing the economy via a national infrastructure bill. Science organizations, including APA, have weighed in with ideas about how to improve scientific infrastructure. APA reached out to share specific suggestions for how behavioral and social science research can inform the response to COVID-19, as well as work to improve the preparation for and response to future pandemics.

To the House Energy and Commerce Committee, APA proposed a National Academies study on ways behavioral and social science might be increased to better inform the public health response to national emergencies like pandemics. APA also proposed that the National Institutes of Health fund one or more clinical trial networks to more quickly test behavioral interventions in diverse populations.

To the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, APA proposed support for a research network on pandemics, natural disasters and climate change, which would encompass physical, biological, behavioral and social scientists working together to identify and address major issues. APA also suggested strengthening the scientific workforce and STEM education pipeline, both to increase the participation of underrepresented groups and bolster graduate research fellowships.

The House leadership has not committed to a schedule for advancing an infrastructure bill, nor to including infrastructure improvements as part of the federal pandemic response, but several committees are gathering this information so they might act quickly, if an agreement is reached to go forward with infrastructure legislation.

*For more information, contact Pat Kobor at [pkobor@apa.org](mailto:pkobor@apa.org) or Craig Fisher at [cfisher@apa.org](mailto:cfisher@apa.org).*

### **Protecting Caregivers from Social Isolation in Passage of Older Americans Act**

On March 25, President Trump signed the reauthorization of the [Older Americans Act](#), which provides for caregiving, nutrition and other programs to help older Americans through 2024. The new law provides a 7% funding increase for programs in the first year and a 6% annual increase for each year thereafter. It also includes about \$9 billion in funding for 2020 to 2024 for state and community grant programs for health, nutrition, caregiving and other services.

APA advocated on the mental health aspects of the bill, mainly caregiving support and social isolation. The measure directs the Administration on Aging to develop a long-term plan for supporting state and local efforts related to social isolation among older adults and report to Congress by January 2021. The measure also extends the RAISE Family Caregivers Act by a year and requires the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a strategy

for family caregivers and an advisory council. For Native Americans, the law authorizes \$208.8 million for services to support older Native Americans and \$60.7 million for Native American caregivers. Finally, the law includes \$169.8 million for research projects to support older Americans.

*For more information, contact Serena Davila at [sdavila@apa.org](mailto:sdavila@apa.org).*

### **Preserving Non-Discrimination Protections in Federal Housing Programs**

Millions of Americans benefit from the housing and homelessness prevention programs the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) operates. Many beneficiaries belong to populations that may experience discrimination because of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability status or religious beliefs. On April 13, APA submitted [comments](#) opposing proposed revision to regulations for faith-based organizations who obtain grants or contracts with HUD. If enacted, the new regulations would remove non-discrimination protections now in place and elevate religious freedom rights over those of HUD program beneficiaries.

*For more information, contact Leo Rennie, MPA, at [lrennie@apa.org](mailto:lrennie@apa.org).*

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