

December 9, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, Majority Leader Schumer, and Minority Leader McConnell:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and the millions of dedicated health care professionals and individuals and families across the country who have contributed to and benefited from the lifesaving care provided by the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model, we strongly urge you to swiftly consider and pass the Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act (H.R. 8543/S. 2993). Led by Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA), Larry Bucshon (R-IN), Angie Craig (D-MN), Marcus Molinaro (R-NY), and Paul Tonko (D-NY) and Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and John Cornyn (R-TX), both the House and Senate versions of this critically important bill have been met with overwhelming bipartisan support. We ask for your leadership in ensuring this much-needed legislation is passed prior to the close of the 118th Congress, either as a stand-alone measure or as part of any legislative package.

As our country continues to face mental health, substance use, and workforce shortage crises, we are immensely grateful for Congress' historic support for CCBHCs, an innovative approach to care that data have shown helps to bolster the workforce and strengthen access to timely and quality care for Americans in need. CCBHCs were established by Congress in 2014 and launched through a demonstration program in 2017. They continued to expand under the Trump administration in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Under the 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, the demonstration program was expanded to add 10 new states every two years until 2032.

CCBHCs are on the front lines of the nation's crises, having dramatically improved access to a comprehensive range of mental health and substance use services to individuals in vulnerable situations; such services include, for example, 24/7 crisis services as a part of the 988 crisis system, hiring hundreds of new substance use-focused clinicians, expanding medication assisted treatment, and reducing patient wait times. CCHBCs are a successful, integrated, and modern way of delivering 21st century mental health and substance use care to individuals and families.

CCBHCs already have provided high-quality, lifesaving mental health and substance use treatment and care to millions of people across the nation. The Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act would provide those opportunities to even more communities. The legislation would help eliminate barriers to access among those traditionally underserved, reduce wait list times so people receive care more quickly, and expand the capacity of states to address the overdose crisis.

The Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act would build upon the work done by Congress in prior years to support the CCBHC model by:

- Adding a prospective payment system (PPS) to the CCBHC state Medicaid option to support clinics in expanding services and increasing the number of clients they serve, while improving clinics' flexibility to deliver client-centered care and retain their workforce.
- Effectively reach more people in need by establishing CCBHCs under the Medicare program, allowing comparable Medicare status and designated payment as other safety net health care providers. While CCBHCs serve Medicare beneficiaries, establishing designated payment for CCBHCs under Medicare will improve workforce sustainability and foster the same outcome quality measures as demonstrated under CCBHCs in Medicaid.
- Improving program oversight by allowing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to require grantees to be accredited by an independent agency, ensuring grantee clinics comply with program requirements.
- Promoting accountability within the program by establishing a national data infrastructure and repository, similar to the Federally Qualified Health Center Uniform Data System, that would allow SAMHSA and Congress to track program progress and outcomes.

Today, around 500 CCBHCs across 48 states and territories (covering 40% of all U.S. counties) serve an estimated 3 million people nationwide. CCBHCs are making a difference — the Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act ensures they'll be able to continue doing so.

Once again, we respectfully ask for your leadership to ensure that the Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act is passed by Congress before the end of the year. We are grateful for your continued commitment to bolstering the mental health and substance use workforce and improving lives of individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges, and we stand ready to work with you and your colleagues to help secure enactment of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
California Consortium of Addiction Programs & Professionals
Centerstone

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Community Catalyst
Faces and Voices of Recovery
Inseparable
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
The Kennedy Forum
Legal Action Center
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Behavioral Health Association of Providers
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence – Maryland
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Council of Urban Indian Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health Without Mental Health
Overdose Prevention Initiative
Policy Center for Maternal Mental Health
Technical Assistance Collaborative