March 15, 2018

The Honorable John Katko

United States House of Representatives

1620 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Thompson

United States House of Representatives

231 Cannon House Office Building

Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable John Barrasso

United States Senate

307 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington DC, 20002

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow

United States Senate

731 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington DC, 20002

Dear Representatives Katko and Thompson and Senators Barrasso and Stabenow,

The undersigned national organizations are writing to express our strong support for the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (H.R. 3032) and the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2017 (S. 1879).

This legislation would authorize mental health counselors (MHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) to serve as Medicare providers. MHCs and MFTs are licensed and qualified to provide mental health and addiction services to the Medicare population. Recognizing these clinicians as Medicare providers would increase access to mental health and addiction services for the elderly and disabled, especially in rural and underserved areas. Counselors and MFTs are between 50% and 300% more likely to be in non-metro areas than other Medicare providers. In fact, only 18% of non-metro counties do not have a MHC or MFT, the lowest percentage for any mental health professions.

H.R. 3032 and S. 1879 would also help address the nationwide opioid crisis. Medicare beneficiaries have some of the highest and fastest-growing rates of opioid use disorder, with hospitalizations increasing by 10 percent per year. Medicare paid for one-third of all opioid-related hospital stays, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Increasing access to community-based addictions services would decrease hospitalizations, reduce costs, and improve addiction outcomes for our nation’s seniors.

For these reasons, we support H.R. 3032 and S. 1879. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to quality mental health care and addiction treatment for all Americans.

Sincerely,

1. 2020Mom
2. American Art Therapy Association
3. American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
4. American Counseling Association
5. American Dance Therapy Association
6. American Group Psychotherapy Association
7. American Mental Health Counselors Association
8. American Occupational Therapy Association
9. Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
10. Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
11. Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
12. The Jewish Federations of North America
13. Mental Health America
14. National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
15. National Alliance on Mental Illness
16. National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
17. National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
18. National Association for Rural Mental Health
19. National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
20. NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
21. National Board for Certified Counselors
22. National Council for Behavioral Health
23. National Disability Rights Network
24. National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health
25. National Health Care for the Homeless Council
26. National Multiple Sclerosis Society
27. Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
28. The Trevor Project
29. National Association of Community Health Centers