



Advancing Health Care Policy
for Mental Health and Addiction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2020

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ABHW Submits Public Comments on E&C Mental Health Hearing

Washington, DC (June 30, 2020) – The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits for over 200 million people, today submitted comments for the record on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health hearing: “High Anxiety and Stress: Legislation to Improve Mental Health During Crisis”.

ABHW thanks Committee Chairman Frank Pallone Jr. (D-NJ), Ranking Member Greg Walden (R-OR), Subcommittee Chairwoman Anna Eshoo (D-CA), and Ranking Member Michael Burgess (R-TX) for their continued leadership in responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency and appreciates the Committee and Subcommittee recognizing the impact that COVID-19 is having on the behavioral health of individuals and communities.

We encourage Congress to take this opportunity to advance legislation and policies that can play a critical role in expanding access to mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) services. These services will be needed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and also will provide long lasting improvements to our nation’s behavioral health system.

Recommendations include, but were not limited to, the following:

- **Mental Health and Addiction Parity.** Continuing discussions about parity to ensure the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) is fully implemented and focused on what it was intended to do. Since its inception, ABHW has been an active supporter of equitable coverage of MH and addiction treatment, and we recognize there are issues that persist in the health care system that may be better addressed under a framework other than MHPAEA.
- **Make Permanent the Use of Telehealth for Mental Health Services.** Waiving restrictions on how and where individuals can access telehealth services has been vital

to accessing care. Making the changes permanent will help address the growing need for behavioral health services.

- **Strengthen and Expand the Behavioral Health Workforce.** Supporting legislation that lifts barriers to Medicare coverage of mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists.

Read ABHW's full public comments >> [HERE](#)

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[ABHW](#) is the leading health plan association working to improve access and quality of care for mental health and substance use disorders. ABHW's members include national and regional health plans who care for more than 200 million people. Together we work to reduce stigma and advance federal policy on mental health and addiction care. Member companies - Aetna Behavioral Health, AmeriHealth Caritas, Anthem/Beacon, Centene Corporation, Cigna, Kaiser Permanente, Magellan Health, New Directions Behavioral Health, and Optum.