



Advancing Health Care Policy  
for Mental Health and Addiction

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Eighteen Organizations Express Support for the Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner (COCM) Act Which Would Bolster Innovative Model of Provision of Mental Health Care**

Washington, D.C., September 10, 2021—Today 18 organizations announced their support for the Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner (COCM) Act which will improve access to evidence-based mental health and substance use care by supporting and investing in the implementation of the Collaborative Care Model in primary care offices.

In the Collaborative Care Model, a primary care physician, a psychiatric consultant and care manager work as a team to identify and provide evidence-based treatment for mental health conditions, measure patients' progress and adjust care when appropriate. The model is supported by more than 90 research studies demonstrating its efficacy in improving patient outcomes and is paid by Medicare, most private insurers and many states' Medicaid programs.

Despite its strong evidence base, the Collaborative Care Model has not been implemented on a wide scale yet. The Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner (COCM) Act, introduced by Reps. Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX) and Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), will provide primary care practices start-up funds and technical assistance as they adopt the model. The bill also provides funds for research to build the evidence base for other models of integrated behavioral health care.

“The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) is pleased to endorse the Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner Act. Driving integrated behavioral and physical health care is a policy priority for ABHW and we support the evidence-based approach taken by the Collaborative Care Model. This legislation will help decrease the

behavioral health workforce shortage by providing behavioral health in more settings and allowing behavioral health providers to practice at the top of their license. In addition to promoting this valuable model of care, the Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner Act also funds important research to evaluate other integration models and assists in ensuring that models that move forward are grounded in evidence-based practice.”

– Pamela Greenberg, MPP, president and CEO, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

“As an organization dedicated to the health and well-being of children and adolescents everywhere, the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry strongly supports the collaborative care model and the promise it holds for reaching and treating children and adolescents with unmet mental health needs. We are grateful to be part of this collaborative effort and thank Reps. Fletcher and Beutler for their leadership in fighting for stronger mental health coverage for all Americans.”

– Gabrielle A. Carlson, MD, president, American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

“An underfunded mental health care system and a strained primary care workforce could exacerbate the unmet need for mental health care. Family physicians are well-positioned to address their patients’ mental health issues and receive high-quality training in these areas. Integrating primary care and mental health services is timely and important given the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, where we expect to see an increase in patients seeking treatment. Primary care physicians, who often have strong relationships with patients before the onset of mental illness and a deep understanding of social context and community factors, will be critical in treating unmet mental health needs—now—and for years to come.”

– Ada Stewart, MD, FAAFP, president, American Academy of Family Physicians

“The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is pleased to endorse the Collaborate in an Orderly and Cohesive Manner Act. Typically, it can take 11 years from the onset of symptoms to when a person receives treatment for a mental health condition, and frankly that is not time we can afford to waste. Reps. Lizzie Fletcher and Jaime Herrera Beutler have introduced a bill that centers on support for collaborative care models that will help ensure that patients receive prompt behavioral health treatment in the office of their primary care physician, including their obstetrician-gynecologist. By providing care in this setting, it increases the number of patients likely to be treated for mental health disorders by giving them immediate access to a physician, a psychiatric consultant, and care manager all working together in a coordinated fashion. We thank Reps. Fletcher and Herrera Beutler for

their leadership and hope this bill helps to eliminate both the stigma around mental health conditions and the barriers to care that can prevent people from healing.”

– J. Martin Tucker, MD, FACOG, president, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

“In order to best care for our patients we need to care for their whole person, that includes both their physical and mental health together. The Collaborative Care Model is an important approach in helping us to do just that. Most patients with behavioral health needs use their physician’s office as their primary source of care, and this model integrates the different types of care our patients need, including mental health, so that the patient’s care team is integrated.”

– George M. Abraham, MD, MPH, FACP, FIDSA, president, American College of Physicians

“America’s employees and their families continue to struggle with mental health challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaborative Care Models, which integrate behavioral health and primary care, are proven to significantly reduce the burden of behavioral health issues, improve patient outcomes and are more cost efficient than usual care. HR Policy Association commends Reps. Fletcher and Herrera Beutler for introducing this important legislation that will improve patient access to high-quality integrative care.”

– D. Mark Wilson, president and CEO, American Health Policy Institute/VP, Health and Employment Policy, HR Policy Association.

"Many physicians have not participated in promising innovations in care delivery such as the Collaborative Care Model because they lack the financial reserves to make the up-front investments needed for practice transformation. This legislation provides an important bridge to help medical practices, especially small and medium practices, make investments in accessible and equitable treatment for their patients’ behavioral, mental, and physical health needs."

– Gerald E. Harmon, MD, president, American Medical Association

“The Collaborative Care Model is a proven method of reaching more Americans with quality mental health care services. The mental health impacts of COVID-19 and the way it uprooted our lives led to high levels of anxiety and depression and record overdoses in our country. We applaud Reps. Fletcher and Herrera Beutler for introducing this legislation, which promotes an innovative solution that will help more Americans get the high-quality treatment they need.”

– Vivian Pender, MD, president, American Psychiatric Association

“Expanding access to the Collaborative Care Model nationally is one of the single most important things we can do to improve and save countless lives for people struggling with depression, addiction, and other mental health concerns. Most mental health conditions are fully treatable when detected early, and the Collaborative Care Model improves the ability to detect and treat mental illness as soon as symptoms begin. This is especially important for youth and young adults, as most mental health conditions emerge then.”

– Andy Keller, president and CEO, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

“Employers care about the holistic support of the health and wellbeing of employees and their families. Expansion of the Collaborative Care Model across the country is foundational to a healthcare system that treats mental illness on a par with other illnesses. Improving access and quality in primary care is the key to early diagnosis and evidence-based treatment and to achieve this behavioral health must be effectively integrated into primary care.”

– Michael Thompson, president and CEO, National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions

“NASW applauds Rep. Lizzie Fletcher and Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler for introducing this critical legislation that promotes integrated health care. The Collaborative Care Model enables more people to have access to quality mental health and behavioral health services in consultation with their primary care physician. Social Workers regard mental health services as a critical component of holistic health care. The Collaborative Care Model is also essential as it addresses access barriers and will reduce disparities.”

– Mildred C. Joyner, DPS, MSW, BSW, LCSW, president, National Association of Social Workers

“The Collaborative Care Model is a well-understood treatment model that is strongly supported by clinical evidence to improve patient outcomes. We should be doing everything we can to encourage broader adoption of collaborative care in the primary care setting. The model has been shown to benefit people suffering from substance use disorder and expand access to addiction treatment through integration of services. Promoting its use for SUD will improve outcomes and save lives, especially where treatment options lack, and stigma endures.”

- Gary Mendell, Founder and CEO, Shatterproof

### **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**

*The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry promotes the healthy development of children, adolescents, and families through advocacy, education, and research. Child and adolescent psychiatrists are the leading physician authority on children's mental health. [aacap.org](http://aacap.org)*

### **American Academy of Family Physicians**

*Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 133,500 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the largest medical society devoted solely to primary care. Family physicians conduct approximately one in five office visits -- that's 192 million visits annually or 48 percent more than the next most visited medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care. [aafp.org/media](http://aafp.org/media)*

### **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**

*The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is the nation's leading group of physicians providing health care for women. As a private, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization of 60,000 members, ACOG strongly advocates for quality health care for women, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education of its members, promotes patient education, and increases awareness among its members and the public of the changing issues facing women's health care. [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org).*

### **American College of Physicians**

*The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization in the United States with members in more than 145 countries worldwide. ACP membership includes 161,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. [acponline.org](http://acponline.org)*

### **American Health Policy Institute**

*American Health Policy Institute is a non-partisan non-profit think tank, started by the HR Policy Foundation, that examines the practical implications of health policy changes through the lens of large employers. The Institute examines the challenges employers face in providing health care to their employees and recommends policy solutions to promote the provision of affordable, high-quality, employer-based health care. The Institute serves to provide thought leadership grounded in the practical experience of America's largest employers. Their mission is to develop impactful strategies to ensure that those purchasing health care are able to not only bend the cost curve, but actually break it, by keeping health care cost inflation in line with general inflation. [americanhealthpolicy.org](http://americanhealthpolicy.org).*

### **American Medical Association**

*The American Medical Association is the physicians' powerful ally in patient care. As the only medical association that convenes 190+ state and specialty medical societies and other critical stakeholders, the AMA represents physicians with a unified voice to all key players in health care. The AMA leverages its strength by removing the obstacles that interfere with patient care, leading the charge to prevent chronic disease and confront public health crises and, driving the future of medicine to tackle the biggest challenges in health care. [ama-assn.org/](http://ama-assn.org/)*

**American Psychiatric Association**

*The American Psychiatric Association, founded in 1844, is the oldest medical association in the country. The APA is also the largest psychiatric association in the world with 37,400 physician members specializing in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses. APA's vision is to ensure access to quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. [psychiatry.org](http://psychiatry.org)*

**Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness**

*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. [abh.org](http://abh.org)*

**HR Policy Association**

*HR Policy Association is the lead organization representing Chief Human Resource Officers at major employers. The Association consists of over 390 of the largest corporations doing business in the United States and globally, and these employers are represented in the organization by their most senior human resource executive. Collectively, their companies employ more than 10 million employees in the United States, over nine percent of the private sector workforce, and 20 million employees worldwide. These senior corporate officers participate in the Association because of their commitment to improving the direction of human resource policy. [hrpolicy.org](http://hrpolicy.org).*

**Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute**

*Launched in 2014, the Meadows Institute helps legislators, state officials, members of the judiciary, and local, state, and national leaders identify equitable systemic solutions to mental health needs and has become Texas's most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. The Meadows Institute is making a significant impact in multiple areas, helping Texas and national leaders shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, addressing the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, and helping all people with mental health needs recover and be well. [mmhpi.org](http://mmhpi.org).*

**National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions**

*The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions (National Alliance) is the only nonprofit, purchaser-led organization with a national and regional structure dedicated to driving health and healthcare value across the country. Its members represent private and public sector, nonprofit, and Taft-Hartley organizations, and more than 45 million Americans, spending over \$300 billion annually on healthcare. [nationalalliancehealth.org](http://nationalalliancehealth.org)*

**National Association of Social Workers**

*The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, DC, is the largest membership organization of professional social workers. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy. [socialworkers.org](http://socialworkers.org)*

**Shatterproof**

*Shatterproof is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis in the United States. Shatterproof harnesses the models of business, the rigor of science and the power of a national movement to create change and save lives through three pillars of work: revolutionizing the addiction*

*treatment system, breaking down addiction-related stigmas and supporting and empowering our communities. [Shatterproof.org](http://Shatterproof.org)*

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