



November 5, 2021

The Honorable Chris Murphy  
136 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy  
520 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cassidy and Murphy,

The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) appreciates the opportunity to comment on your request to address mental health (MH) and substance use disorders (SUDs) programs and policy ideas. ABHW appreciates your leadership and looks forward to working closely together on our shared goal to improve access to MH and SUD care and treatment.

ABHW serves as the national voice for payers that manage behavioral health insurance benefits. ABHW member companies provide coverage to approximately 200 million people in both the public and private sectors to treat mental health and substance use disorders and other behaviors that impact health and wellness.

Overarchingly, our organization's goals aim to **increase access, drive integration, support prevention, raise awareness, reduce stigma, and advance evidence-based treatment and quality outcomes**. Furthermore, through our policy work, we strive to promote equal access to quality treatment and address the stark inequities created by systemic racism. We are deeply concerned about health disparities in this country in the areas of MH and SUD services and are committed to promoting health equity in the health care system.

Behavioral health services have become increasingly important because of social isolation, job loss, illness and death, and domestic violence related to COVID-19; and we anticipate the utilization of such services will continue long after the public health emergency (PHE) is lifted.

While we do not have comments on the specific programs outlined in your letter, ABHW supports an overall examination of the behavioral health system and encourages addressing the siloed system to promote better coordination of funding and programs. ABHW also encourages evaluating how grant money has been spent to determine successes and failures. This will help develop a better understanding of how funding has been spent and whether funding has supported evidence-based practices. Additionally, a review of existing programs will address redundancy, promote quality, and advance successful program ideas.

You can review ABHW's broader mental health and substance use disorder legislative and policy recommendations [here](#).

Thank you for your interest in developing new legislation and better understanding how Congress should continue to support the provision of MH and SUD services moving forward. If you have any questions or would like to discuss ABHW's policy priorities please contact Maeghan Gilmore, Director of Government Affairs, at [gilmore@abhw.org](mailto:gilmore@abhw.org) or 202-449-2278.

Sincerely,

Pamela Greenberg, MPP  
President and CEO

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