ABHW
Advancing Health Care Policy for
Mental Health & Substance Use Disorders

September 30, 2026

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2111 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee
United States Senate
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Medicaid Mobile Crisis Services

Dear Chairman Crapo, Senator Wyden, Chairman Guthrie, and Rep. Pallone:

The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) urges Congress to permanently extend the Medicaid Mobile Crisis State Option, which allows states to use Medicaid funds to support 988 suicide hotline mobile crisis teams. If the program expires in March 2027, hundreds of thousands of people in 21 states risk losing access to mobile crisis services upon its expiration, as authorized under Section 1947 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S. Code 1396w-6).

ABHW is the national voice for health plans managing behavioral health insurance benefits. Our member companies provide coverage to 200 million people in both the public and private sectors to treat mental health (MH), substance use disorders (SUDs), and other behaviors that impact health and wellness. Our organization aims to increase access, drive integration, support prevention, raise awareness, reduce stigma, and advance evidence-based treatment and quality outcomes. Furthermore, our policy work aims to ensure that physical and behavioral health care is integrated and coordinated. ABHW is committed to improving outcomes in whole-person care for all individuals and communities. We believe access to comprehensive, evidence-based MH and SUD services is critical to enhancing patients' health and overall well-being.

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Mobile crisis services are commonly provided by teams composed of a social worker and a peer support professional who respond to the scene of a crisis episode when it cannot be resolved over the phone or via text from a lifeline call center, which can account for upwards of 10% of incidents. Mobile crisis responders are trained in trauma-informed care, de-escalation, cultural sensitivity, acute behavioral health screening and assessment, crisis intervention, safety planning – critical services that can save lives in times of crisis. Mobile crisis services are part of a larger crisis care continuum supported by 988, which have handled over 26.2 million contacts nationwide since its launch in July 2022.

ABHW strongly supports mobile crisis services, and **we urge Congress to permanently extend the Medicaid Mobile Crisis State Option** to safeguard access to this critical service. Like with telehealth flexibilities, short-term extensions give programs limited room to plan long-term, making substantial investments in these programs difficult. A permanent extension ensures that communities can invest in building robust, long-term programs.

Thank you for your continued leadership in ensuring access to high-quality mental health services; if you have any questions or would like to discuss further with ABHW, please contact Maeghan Gilmore, Vice President of Government Affairs, at gilmore@abhw.org.

Sincerely,

Deborah H. Witchey

Debbie Witchey, MHA
President and CEO