

April 6, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Cole:

On behalf of the Well Being Working Group (WBWG), a coalition focused on primary prevention and health equity strategies to address substance misuse, suicide, and mental and emotional distress, we applaud your efforts to support mental health and substance use disorder programs through FY 2023 funding. Composed of around 40 diverse organizations, the WBWG supports population-level strategies to prevent the onset of addiction and other mental health challenges through improvements to social, physical, and economic conditions in communities.

As the U.S. Surgeon General recently noted, addressing the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will require “an all-of-society effort...in how we view and prioritize mental health,” including policies that promote resilience and remove economic and social barriers that impact mental health outcomes. As you draft the FY 2023 appropriations legislation, we urge you to focus on primary prevention strategies, which promote protective factors in communities that can mitigate stressors contributing to rising rates of substance misuse and self-harm. These strategies include preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), expanding substance use prevention, mental health, and resiliency programs in schools, bolstering crisis intervention programs, and promoting social connection through peer support and other services. Primary prevention can complement investments in treatment and recovery services and relieve pressure on emergency healthcare providers and post-crisis intervention programs.

The WBWG also strongly urges you to help remove barriers to mental health access by appropriating funds to address root causes of health inequities, particularly those stemming from structural racism. Equity-focused efforts include promoting linguistically and culturally responsive health services, leveraging non-traditional partners to reach underserved populations, and establishing community-based initiatives to integrate social services with mental health

treatment. Programs centered in health and racial equity can help address rising rates of suicide among Black youth, for example, and the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color in general.

Expanded funding for the following programs would help advance primary prevention and racial equity in mental health care services and curb rising rates of deaths from suicide, drug overdose, and alcohol use disorder:

- CDC ACEs Program
- CDC Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH)
- CDC Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program
- CDC National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS)
- SAMHSA Healthy Transitions
- SAMHSA Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention
- SAMHSA Project AWARE
- SAMHSA Minority Fellowship
- SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework – Partnerships for Success
- SAMHSA Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act Grants
- ACF Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Grants
- HRSA/ACF Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program
- HRSA Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training

As you consider funding for these programs, the WBWG can provide technical assistance, research and analysis, connections to patients and on-the-ground work in communities, expert testimony, and policy recommendations. In general, the diverse membership of the WBWG can share perspectives on strategies to support mental health at the community level and treat addiction and other issues through integrated systems of care and population-specific approaches.

Again, the WBWG applauds your efforts to appropriate funds to address the unprecedented mental health challenges facing our country, and we would welcome the opportunity to share our expertise with you and your staff in the months ahead. Please reach out to Brandon Reavis, Senior Government Relations Manager at Trust for America’s Health, at breavis@tfah.org with any questions or requests.

Sincerely,

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
The Kennedy Forum
Mental Health America
Public Health Foundation
Sandy Hook Promise
Trust for America’s Health

American Public Health Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Inseparable
Prevention Institute
Safe States Alliance
Social Current