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Suite 900
Washington, D.C. 20024

June 7, 2021

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The Honorable Senator Richard Burr
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United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Burr,

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty society representing over 37,400 psychiatric physicians who treat mental health and substance use disorders, I write to express our support for the nomination of Dr. Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon for Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Assistant Secretary will play a key role in coordinating the federal government's initiatives to address the serious mental health and substance use challenges currently facing our country. We encourage a prompt confirmation to facilitate the important work needed to address these challenges.

An estimated 19.3 million American adults had a substance use disorder in 2019, and approximately 841,000 people have died from a drug overdose between 2000 to 2019. Preliminary data suggest that overdose deaths accelerated during the pandemic and our new public opinion poll released on May 2 found Americans are still struggling with the impact of the last year. More than four in ten Americans (41%) say they are more anxious than last year. While still substantial, that is down from just over 60% last year. Young adults, ages 18 to 29 (49%), and Hispanic/Latinos (50%) are more likely to say they are more anxious now compared to last year.

We need an experienced leader at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to spearhead national efforts to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities. Dr. Delphin-Rittmon has established herself as that capable leader in the mental health and addiction space throughout her distinguished career. She is a public health expert with over 20 years of experience in the mental health and addiction field at the local, state, and national levels. Over the span of her career, she has become an expert at designing, evaluating, and administering mental health, substance use, and prevention services across systems.

Further, Dr. Delphin-Rittmon currently serves as the Commissioner of the Connecticut State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, a position she was appointed to in 2015. In this role, she has demonstrated her commitment to meaningful community

inclusion, culturally responsive services, and a recovery-oriented approach. She has managed a multimillion-dollar budget, thousands of employees, and led the department through the COVID pandemic, rapidly transforming their agency operations in order to maintain core services for the 110,000 individuals they serve. Dr. Delphin-Rittmon has been instrumental in securing grants targeting women's services, recovery, the opioid crisis, suicide prevention, Hurricane Maria, and the behavioral impact of the pandemic. She also co-chaired Connecticut's Alcohol and Drug Policy Council that guided many opioid crisis interventions. Given this role, she understands the need to focus on the full continuum of behavioral health needs from prevention to treatment and recovery.

Dr. Delphin-Rittmon is known for her stakeholder engagement and listening to the field to best meet the needs of people with mental illness and addiction. We are eager to begin working with her to ensure all Americans have access to vital mental health and addiction services. We urge expeditious consideration and approval of her nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saul Levin" followed by "MD, MPA" in smaller letters. There is a horizontal line under the name "Saul".

Saul Levin, MD, MPA, FRCP-E, FRCPsych
CEO and Medical Director