

September 22, 2020

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
U.S. Senate
302 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senate
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Sullivan and Rosen,

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, families, mental health and addiction providers, advocates and other stakeholders committed to strengthening access to high-quality mental and behavioral health care, is writing to express our strong support for S. 4211, the Facilitating Reforms that Offer Necessary Telehealth in Every Rural (FRONTIER) Community Act, which would expand access to mental health services through telemedicine in frontier states. Your leadership on this issue is critical for individuals with mental health conditions in communities that traditionally lack access to needed services and providers.

People living with behavioral health conditions need timely and safe access to mental health and substance use disorder services during this crisis. The pandemic is exacerbating existing behavioral health issues and leading to new instances of individuals suffering from anxiety, depression, and substance misuse, and “originating site” requirements on the use of telemedicine for mental health services only exacerbate the lack of access our frontier states experience.

Your legislation expands access to mental health services through telehealth in frontier states and makes the change permanent. We applaud you for removing the “originating site” requirement in existing law. Further, we commend you directing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Indian Health Service (IHS) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), to award grants for broadband infrastructure and provide additional telehealth flexibility for Indian Health Service facilities.

All of these provisions are essential to the frontier states: Alaska, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. This legislation will grant individuals experiencing mental health conditions access to safe and timely care and will help mitigate some of the broadband issues that frontier states and Indian Health Service facilities face.

The MHLG thanks you for your bipartisan commitment to improving access to telehealth for Americans who need mental health treatment and live in frontier communities. We pledge our support to help you move this legislation through Congress.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association of Suicidology

American Association on Health and Disability

The American Counseling Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)

The Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Education Development Center

Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice

Inseparable

International OCD Foundation

Lakeshore Foundation

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

Postpartum Support International

Psychotherapy Action Network Advocacy

Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America

The Trevor Project

Well Being Trust