



1000 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1825
Arlington, VA 22209

January 8, 2018

**Board of Trustees
2017-2018**

Anita S. Everett, M.D.

President

Altha J. Stewart, M.D.

President-Elect

Philip R. Muskin, M.D., M.A.

Secretary

Bruce J. Schwartz, M.D.

Treasurer

Maria A. Oquendo, M.D., Ph.D.

Renée L. Binder, M.D.

Paul Summergrad, M.D.

Past Presidents

Jeffrey L. Geller, M.D., M.P.H.

Vivian B. Pender, M.D.

Roger Peele, M.D.

Ronald M. Burd, M.D.

Jenny Boyer, M.D., Ph.D., J.D.

Melinda L. Young, M.D.

Jeffrey Akaka, M.D.

Lama Bazzi, M.D.

Ramaswamy Viswanathan,

M.D., D.Sc.

Richard F. Summers, M.D.

Uchenna B. Okoye, M.D., M.P.H.

Tanuja Gandhi, M.D.

Trustees

**Assembly
2017-2018**

Theresa Miskimen, M.D.

Speaker

James (Bob) R. Batterson, M.D.

Speaker-Elect

Steven R. Daviss, M.D.

Recorder

Administration

Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A.

CEO and Medical Director

Sen. Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Sen. Edward Markey
United States Senate
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Sen. Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Stabenow, Markey, and Warren:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty society representing more than 37,000 psychiatric physicians nationwide, we are writing in support of a bill you introduced late last month, the CHIP Mental Health Parity Act (S. 2253).

As you know, over the past twenty years, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) served to extend health insurance to many children and adolescents from families with low incomes and do not qualify for the state's Medicaid program. In 2016, partly due to the availability of coverage through CHIP programs, the nationwide rate of uninsured children reached a historic low of 4.5%.¹ Accordingly, the APA continues to urge your colleagues in Congress to reauthorize the CHIP program for a period of no less than five (5) years. We hope that Congress will soon take steps that are necessary for the continued success of this critical and cost-effective program.

Access to mental health care remains a critical component of CHIP programs, as approximately 850,000 CHIP beneficiaries experience serious behavioral or emotional disorders.² Nearly half of all diagnosable mental illnesses show

¹ Georgetown Univ. Health Policy Institute, [Nation's Uninsured Rate for Children Drops to Another Historic Low in 2016](https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Uninsured-rate-for-kids-10-17.pdf) (Sept. 2017), available at: <https://ccf.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Uninsured-rate-for-kids-10-17.pdf>.

² Timothy Jost, [Implementing Health Reform: Medicaid & CHIP Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity](https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20150408.046243/full/) (Apr. 8, 2015), available at: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20150408.046243/full/>.

symptoms by age 14, and 75% begin by the age of 24.³ Without early intervention services through programs like CHIP, these disorders can lead to tragic and costly consequences, such as substance abuse, school dropout, involvement with law enforcement, and suicide.

By including “mental health and substance use disorder services” within the range of “basic services” in benchmark-equivalent CHIP plans, your bill takes a sensible, but very critical, first step in eliminating the gaps in mental health coverage for children and clarifying that all CHIP plans are subject to the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act requirements.

We look forward to working with you in your efforts to advance this bill. If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Mild, Interim Chief of Government Relations, at amild@psych.org, or at (703) 907-8645.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saul Levin, MD, MPA". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a white rectangular background.

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

³ National Alliance on Mental Illness, [Mental Health Facts: Children and Teens](https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/Children-MH-Facts-NAMI.pdf), available at: <https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/Infographics/Children-MH-Facts-NAMI.pdf>.