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February 9, 2018

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty association representing over 37,800 psychiatric physicians, thank you for your leadership in facilitating the inclusion of additional funding for many mental health, substance use, and criminal justice programs aiding the millions of Americans living with a serious mental illness and substance use disorders, their families, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals, in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018.

At a time when millions of Americans face uncertainty to the future of health care, access to mental health and substance use services is critical to ensuring the welfare of those most vulnerable. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 68 million Americans experienced a psychiatric or substance use disorder in the past year. Untreated, these millions of Americans will effectively contribute heavily to the burden of disease on their families, the community, and the country. We recognize that Congress faces difficult decisions in funding myriad priorities with increasingly limited resources and appreciate your efforts to prioritize funding for mental health-related programs. Through enhanced federal commitment to programs—stimulating the mental health workforce, furthering evidence-based practices, and advancing medical research—we can ensure the next generation of mental health professionals are well-prepared to combat current and future health-related challenges.

Although the APA is continuing to analyze the full scope of the budget agreement, we are encouraged by the inclusion of the following:

- **\$6 billion (over two years) to combat the opioid crisis and support mental health programs** via state grants to fight drug abuse and expand substance abuse and mental health treatment;
- **\$2 billion (over two years) to support NIH scientific research**, which can help fund efforts such as studying non-opioid pain therapies;

- **An Additional four years of funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**, which coupled with the recent six-year extension will ensure the stability of this critical program for the next decade;
- **Funding for provisions from the “CHRONIC Care Act,”** which could make it easier for Medicare Advantage enrollees to pay for telehealth services;
- **Two-year reauthorizations of funding for the National Health Service Corps, the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education Program, and Community Health Centers**, which all provide critical health-related resources to vulnerable communities; and
- **Technical corrections related to the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA)**, which will help ease regulatory burdens faced by physicians.

Again, we acknowledge the current budget climate is extraordinarily challenging and that Congress has a responsibility to carefully consider the nation's spending priorities. We thank you for your efforts to craft a bipartisan budget package that addresses many health-related priorities, especially as they relate to mental illness and/or substance use disorder. The APA looks forward to continued collaboration to build and support robust systems of care, innovative programs, and a high-performing workforce to ensure the stability of our healthcare system now and for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A." The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a white rectangular box.

Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A., F.R.C.P.-E.  
CEO and Medical Director