

April 11, 2019

The Honorable John Yarmuth, Chair  
House Committee on Budget  
402 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Budget  
2412 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Yarmuth and Ranking Member Womack:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group, the undersigned organizations are writing today to support H.R. 2021 – the Investing for the People Act of 2019. This important legislation would raise both the defense and nondefense discretionary caps by \$88 billion each in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021. The Mental Health Liaison Group is a coalition of national organizations representing mental health and substance use consumers, providers, family members, and other concerned citizens. Together, on behalf of the millions of Americans living with mental and substance use disorders, their families and communities, we advocate for public policies and funding to improve access to high-quality care.

In 2018, Congress worked hard to pass the Balanced Budget Act. This bipartisan, two-year budget deal provided relief from mandated spending cuts that would have taken effect. The deal added \$6 billion in spending for mental health and addiction treatment programs. When the BBA expires, there would be a \$55 billion reduction in total funding available for non-defense discretionary programs like mental health and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery services. H.R. 2021 would prevent such draconian cuts and instead invest in needed health care programs for Americans living with mental illness or addiction.

In 2017, nearly 50,000 Americans died by suicide and over 70,000 died by drug overdose.<sup>i,ii</sup> Without a deal to stave off sequestration, programs that provide needed funding for states to implement proven and effective services for children, parents, veterans, and homeless individuals with substance use or mental health conditions would be cut. Should sequestration take full effect, programs that reduce expensive hospitalizations, emergency department usage, and involvement with the criminal justice system would all be slashed.

The Mental Health Liaison Group urges the passing of H.R. 2021 – the Investing for the People Act of 2019– and this spending package to raise the budget caps on defense and nondefense discretionary spending in FY2020 and FY2021. The Mental Health Liaison Group stands ready to serve your offices as a resource and guide for funding issues related to mental health and substance use prevention, treatment and recovery programs. Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

*2020 Mom*  
*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 Counseling Association*  
*American Dance Therapy Association*  
*American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*  
*American Group Psychotherapy Association*  
*American Mental Health Counselors Association*  
*American Occupational Therapy Association*  
*American Psychiatric Association*

*American Psychological Association*  
*American Society of Addiction Medicine*  
*Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*  
*Clinical Social Work Association*  
*College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists*  
*Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance*  
*Eating Disorders Coalition*  
*Education Development Center\**  
*Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice*  
*International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium*  
*The Jewish Federations of North America*  
*Mental Health America*  
*National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health*  
*National Alliance to End Homelessness*  
*National Alliance on Mental Illness*  
*National Association for Children's Behavioral Health*  
*National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors*  
*National Association for Rural Mental Health*  
*National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors*  
*National Association of Social Workers*  
*National Association of State Mental Health Programs Directors*  
*National Board for Certified Counselors*  
*National Council for Behavioral Health*  
*National Disability Rights Network*  
*National Eating Disorders Association*  
*National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health*  
*National Health Care for the Homeless Council\**  
*National League for Nursing*  
*National Register of Health Service Psychologists*  
*Psychotherapy Action Network\**  
*Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America*  
*School-Based Health Alliance\**  
*School Social Work Association of America*  
*SMART Recovery*  
*Treatment Communities of America*

*\*Affiliate Member*

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<sup>i</sup> <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>