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November 7, 2014

Chairman Jeff Miller
Veterans' Affairs Committee
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the medical specialty association representing more than 35,000 psychiatric physicians and their patients and their families, I write to express our thanks for your efforts on improving access to mental health care for our nation's veterans. These efforts include the recent passage of H.R. 3230, the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act, as well as the upcoming House Veterans Affairs Committee legislative hearing on several important veterans' health and mental health related measures.

The recently passed Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act included several important provisions for improving access to psychiatric and substance use disorder services for veterans who experience first-hand the critical psychiatric workforce shortage, and other access issues, every day. The law will expand physician training, increase medical school loan forgiveness opportunities, extend the rehabilitation program for veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury, enhance access to care for military sexual trauma, and improve the transition process for injured service members from the Department of Defense (DoD) to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). APA believes these provisions will markedly improve VHA accountability and access to care.

On Friday, November 14, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee will hold a hearing on several measures that are important in the continuing effort towards improving access to mental healthcare for veterans. H.R. 5059, the Clay Hunt SAV Act, is among the bills under consideration for further action by the Committee. H.R. 5059 includes provisions that would establish a demonstration program for medical school loan repayment for psychiatrists serving in the VA, require the creation of a VA website to provide resources on VA mental health care services, improve discharge coordination between the VA and DoD, and establish a pilot program in five Veterans Integrated Service Networks for a community-oriented veteran peer support network bolstered by community outreach teams. APA is pleased to support these provisions. We appreciate the Committee's examination of H.R. 5059 and urge members of Congress to continue the progress



they've made on reforms to substantially improve the lives and mental health needs of our nation's veterans and their loved ones.

Thank you again for your efforts and attention to these important matters. If you have any questions or we can assist you further, please contact APA's Department of Government Relations at advocacy@psych.org or (703) 907-7800.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Saul Levin, MD, MPA".

Saul Levin, MD, MPA
CEO and Medical Director