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July 23, 2019

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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H 232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty society representing over 38,500 psychiatric physicians nationwide, we urge you to pass H.R. 3239, the *Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in CBP Custody Act*. This legislation will establish vital humanitarian standards for detainees at our borders and ensure that these individuals will be given routine and appropriate physical and mental health screenings upon entering into U.S. custody. The passage and enactment of this bill is an important first step towards resolving the crisis at our southern border.

As physician experts in mental health, we see the painful toll that trauma in any form has on both our adult and child patients. Our members have seen this suffering firsthand and heard the heartbreaking stories from asylum seekers fleeing violence in their home countries. These stories reflect the worst types of human-inflicted pain and suffering caused by violence and war. This is why the APA is proud to support policies that aim to mitigate the harmful, long-term psychological effects of the current highly stressful environment experienced by many detainees in U.S. custody.

It is critical for all those involved in the caretaking and processing of detainees to better recognize, and expediently diagnose and treat mental health needs at the border. Enacting H.R. 3239 sets the groundwork towards ensuring that the physical and mental health needs of detainees are met, and that appropriate standardization of intervention and treatments are followed to ensure the health and well-being of those individuals seeking refuge in our country.

We applaud your leadership as Congress acts to instate basic humanitarian principles to address the dire situation at our border. As always, we stand ready and willing to work with you and other Congressional and Administrative leaders to solve this and other important issues pertaining to mental health.

Sincerely,

Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A., FRCP-E
CEO and Medical Director
American Psychiatric Association

Bruce J. Schwartz, MD
President
American Psychiatric Association

CC: The Honorable Raul Ruiz, MD