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September 20, 2017

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
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United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
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U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
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 more than 37,000 psychiatric physicians nationwide, I urge you to support continued and expanded access to quality evidence-based mental health care services through the extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) by advancing a five-year reauthorization. With CHIP funding set to expire on September 30, 2017, Congress must act now to stabilize the CHIP funding stream and protect the gains in children's health coverage that have resulted in more than 95 percent of all children in America being enrolled in health insurance coverage.

Over the past twenty years, the CHIP<sup>1</sup> has served to extend health insurance to many children and adolescents with low incomes who do not qualify for their state's Medicaid program. Since CHIP's initial enactment in 1997, the uninsured rate of children ages 0-17 fell from 13.9% to 4.5% by 2015. As of FY 2016, 8.9 million children were enrolled in CHIP. This program is vital for low-income children and adolescents in need of mental health services, who are more likely to have a reliable source of health and dental care and to have regular preventative care visits via enrollment in CHIP. Access to mental health care remains a critical component of CHIP programs, as approximately 850,000 CHIP beneficiaries experience serious behavioral or emotional disorders.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Originally created by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was reauthorized through FY 2013 under the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009 (CHIPRA). The Affordable Care Act extended funding for CHIP through FY 2015, and the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 (MACRA) extended funding for the program through FY 2017. Absent an extension from Congress, CHIP is currently set to expire on Sept. 30, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> <http://healthaffairs.org/blog/2015/04/08/implementing-health-reform-medicaid-chip-mental-health-and-substance-abuse-parity/>

Nearly half of all diagnosable mental illnesses show symptoms by age 14, and 75% begin by the age of 24, yet only 1 in 5 adolescents between 12-17 years-old receive treatment or counseling. When left untreated, these disorders can lead to tragic and costly consequences, such as substance abuse, school dropout, involvement with law enforcement, and suicide.

The success of the CHIP program led to its bipartisan reauthorization on multiple occasions. As Congress continues to work to reauthorize CHIP funding, it is critical that any reforms do not undo the gains which have been made over the past several years for children with mental illness, and that any such reforms only further enhance coverage and access to lifesaving evidence-based care. If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Mild, Interim Chief of Government Relations at 703-907-8645.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A.  
CEO and Medical Director

Cc: Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch and Ranking Member Ron Wyden, House Committee on Energy and Commerce Chairman Greg Walden and Ranking Member Frank Pallone