



800 Maine Avenue, S.W.  
Suite 900  
Washington, D.C. 20024

March 15, 2022

**Board of Trustees  
2021-2022**

Vivian B. Pender, M.D.  
*President*  
Rebecca W. Brendel, M.D., J.D.  
*President-Elect*  
Sandra M. DeJong, M.D., M.Sc.  
*Secretary*  
Richard F. Summers, M.D.  
*Treasurer*

Jeffrey Geller, M.D., M.P.H.  
Bruce J. Schwartz, M.D.  
Altha J. Stewart, M.D.  
*Past Presidents*

Eric M. Plakun, M.D.  
Glenn A. Martin, M.D.  
Kenneth Certa, M.D.  
Cheryl D. Wills, M.D.  
Jenny L. Boyer, M.D., Ph.D., J.D.  
Melinda L. Young, M.D.  
Mary Hasbah Roessel, M.D.  
Elie G. Aoun, M.D., M.R.O.  
Felix Torres, M.D., M.B.A.  
Michele Reid, M.D.  
Sanya Virani, M.D., M.P.H.  
Urooj Yazdani, M.D.  
*Trustees*

**Assembly  
2021-2022**

Mary Jo Fitz-Gerald, M.D., M.B.A.  
*Speaker*  
Adam Nelson, M.D.  
*Speaker-Elect*  
Vasilis K. Pozios, M.D.  
*Recorder*

**Administration**

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

The Honorable Xavier Becerra  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

On behalf the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty society representing over 37,400 psychiatric physicians who treat mental health and substance use disorders, we urge you to renew the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) Declaration for at least another 90 days beyond the April 16, 2022, date previously declared by the Administration. This declaration is necessary to ensure continuation of the critical 1135 waivers and Medicaid coverage flexibilities. A necessary step that enables mental health clinicians to continue to offer the most efficient and effective care possible, as we transition to a new phase of the pandemic while continuing to address the ongoing mental health and addiction crises.

We appreciate the multiple times the administration has extended the PHE and offered flexibility to providing care. These actions have specifically allowed our members to ensure access and patient continuity of care through the use of telepsychiatry and audio-only services. Some telehealth flexibilities have recently been made permanent, while others are still only allowed during the PHE. Given the Biden Administration's focus on the mental health and addiction crises, and our nation's limited behavioral health workforce, we worry that access will be unduly limited if the PHE ends without making more of these flexibilities permanent. For instance, extending the PHE will allow for Congress to take steps to pass legislation which would address some of these issues, such as eliminating the in-person examination that is required for Medicare patients with mental health disorders to continue to be seen via telehealth. Extending the PHE would also give time for the Drug Enforcement Agency to address the Ryan Haight Act's in-person examination requirement for prescribing controlled substances by releasing regulations outlining a special registration process. Finally, extending the PHE would also provide clinicians with the opportunity to plan for managing their relationships with patients they may see across state lines—many of which were newly established entirely via telehealth during the pandemic.

The APA appreciates the support that HHS and the entire Biden Administration is providing to our members so that they are best positioned to continue to provide high quality care for their patients and communities. **We urge you to extend the PHE further, which is set to expire April 16, 2022, and provide at least a 90-day notice before the PHE ends to give clinicians time to plan. We also urge you to**

**work with Congress to extend the flexibilities for at least one year after the PHE ends to ensure continuity of care for patients.** The health and well-being of our nation is our top priority, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saul Levin, MD, MPA". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Saul Levin, MD, MPA, FRCP-E, FRCPsych  
CEO and Medical Director