

February 10, 2023

Mr. Carlos Elizondo
White House Social Secretary
The White House, East Wing
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Elizondo:

As leading organizations dedicated to improving outcomes for people with mental health and substance use conditions, we are writing to ask that you join us in observing Mental Health Month by lighting the White House green on May 1, 2023. The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) is a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers, advocates, payers, and other stakeholders committed to strengthening Americans' access to mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery care. Our nearly 80 member organizations are dedicated to advancing solutions that address the worsening crisis in mental health and substance use disorders among both children and adults and working to eliminate the barriers to care experienced by too many Americans.

The purpose of Mental Health Month, observed during May since 1949, is to educate the public about mental health conditions, reduce discrimination and further acceptance of people with these conditions, and encourage people to get screened and seek help. Given the data and prevalence, it is critically important that Americans are educated during the month of May.

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) 2021 data released by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration this month indicates the continued crisis in mental health and addiction and the lack of treatment and supports available to those experiencing these conditions. According to SAMHSA, nearly one in four adults had a mental illness in the past year. Among youth, one in five had a major depressive episode, and more than half of those having such an episode did not receive treatment. For young adults ages 18-25, nearly half, or 46%, had a substance use condition and/or a mental health condition.

We are very grateful that President Biden has prioritized mental health and addiction as key parts of his unity agenda. This year, he celebrated the passage of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act and the FY '23 Omnibus Appropriations bill and the additional resources for mental health services included in these packages, many of which were reflected in his proposed budget. The Administration also began implementation of the new 988 number, ushering in a new era in responding to mental health crises. A White House lighting for Mental Health Month would align well with his current initiatives and indicate his ongoing commitment to this critical issue that is affecting so many Americans.

Further, a White House lighting would be a great opportunity for the administration to draw continued attention to the U.S. Surgeon General's advisory on addressing the nation's youth mental health crisis. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health challenges were the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people, and the pandemic only added to those pre-existing challenges. We hope you will consider joining with us to observe the occasion by lighting the White House on May 1, 2023, in green – the color for the month. This would highlight the Administration's current agenda, draw attention to the President's bipartisan efforts, and educate the public about mental health conditions, ultimately saving lives.

Sincerely,

Mental Health America

2020 Mom

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology

American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists

American Counseling Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Children's Hospital Association

Clinical Social Work Association

College for Behavioral Health Leadership

Crisis Residential Association

Crisis Text Line

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance.

Employee Assistance Professionals Association

First Focus on Children

Inseparable

International OCD Foundation

International Society for Psychiatric Mental Health Nurses

Jewish Federations of North America

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability
Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Association of Peer Supporters
National Association of Social Workers
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families
National League for Nursing
National Network of Depression Centers
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies
REDC Consortium
RI International
Sandy Hook Promise
The Jed Foundation (JED)
The Kennedy Forum
Vibrant Emotional Health