

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Senate Appropriations Committee
156 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We are writing to ask for your support for two programs that are helping to address the interrelated mental health and suicide crises confronting our nation. Specifically, we are seeking \$250 million for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) grants and \$757.5 million for the Mental Health Block Grant.

CCBHCs are designed to address a stark reality: we serve roughly half of people with serious mental illness in the United States and only 12% of people with addiction, including opioid use disorder. The remainder are cared for in hospital emergency departments, homeless shelters and county jails. In comparison, by integrating general medical and behavioral health care while partnering with local law enforcement, the network of CCBHCs financed through Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grants as well as the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Act Medicaid demonstration are producing astonishing results. The President's FY 2021 budget notes... "as of January 2020, patients have 61.6 percent reduction in hospitalization and 62.1 percent reduction in Emergency Department (ED) visits."

Similarly, the Mental Health Block Grant is a principal vehicle for financial support for evidenced-based, comprehensive services for low income and uninsured persons living with serious mental illnesses. In FY 2019, the House Labor/HHS included new bipartisan funding to create a 5% Mental Health Block Grant set-aside that will permit state mental health agencies to initiate crisis care programs nationwide. Last year, 150,000 Americans died from alcohol or drug-induced fatalities and suicide. Nearly a third—more than 47,000—were suicides. The proposed block grant set-aside would help to address this mental health emergency by funding crisis call centers, mobile crisis services and crisis stabilization programs.

It is important to note that FY 2021 HHS budget submission seeks a total of \$85 million in increases for both these initiatives. We thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Tim Kaine
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator