

February 25, 2021

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell,

The undersigned organizations, representing mental health, suicide prevention, substance use disorder, and crisis response providers and organizations, are writing to thank you for prioritizing crisis intervention and to indicate our **strong support for enhanced federal Medicaid support for community-based mobile crisis intervention services as currently included in the proposed American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; Section 3104** for individuals experiencing mental health and substance-use disorder crises.

Recent reporting by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated worsening mental health outcomes, increased substance use, and elevated suicidal ideation in the United States as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Crisis response without the involvement of behavioral health professionals and paraprofessionals often places historically marginalized communities at disproportionate risk of harm and poor outcomes. It is crucial that all individuals in acute distress or experiencing a behavioral health crisis receive equitable and appropriate responses and care, separate from emergency medical and law enforcement interventions.

Mobile crisis outreach has been identified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as a core service and best practice of behavioral health crisis care, but many communities do not have appropriate systems in

place to respond to individuals in need. Permitting states to provide bundled payments for mobile crisis services at an 85% FMAP rate will incentivize state Medicaid programs to cover mobile crisis intervention services for individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis.

Mobile crisis outreach will be a crucial component of the future 988 crisis response system, which will be nationally operational by July 2022. By providing enhanced Medicaid coverage for mobile crisis services, Congress would provide states and communities with the flexibility to braid an appropriate and stable crisis intervention response system and care continuum tailored to local needs.

We are deeply thankful for your commitment to providing effective responses to mental health, suicide, and substance use crises during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

American Association of Suicidology

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Centerstone

The Jewish Federations of North America

The Kennedy Forum

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare

National Association for State Mental Health Program Directors

National Council for Behavioral Health

Steinberg Institute

Vibrant Emotional Health