December 21, 2020

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
219 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto
U.S. Senator
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Wyden and Senator Cortez Masto:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our strong support for the CAHOOTS Act (S.4441) to enhance the utilization of crisis response services and mobile interventions for individuals experiencing mental health and substance-use disorder crises in local communities.

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 harms 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. 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 and grant funding for mobile crisis services, the CAHOOTS Act will increase access to crisis resources and support effective responses for individuals in acute distress.

We applaud commitment to supporting effective responses to mental health and substance use-disorder crises. We pledge our support to help you move this important legislation through Congress.

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1 CDC Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm (August, 2020)
Sincerely,

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Suicidology
American Association on Health and Disability
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychiatric Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Centerstone
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Eating Disorders Coalition
Education Development Center
The Kennedy Forum
Lakeshore Foundation
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Counties
National Association of Social Workers
National Federation of Families

Postpartum Support International
RI International
Sandy Hook Promise
The Steinberg Institute
The Trevor Project
Vibrant Emotional Health
Well Being Trust