May 26, 2020

Dear Representatives Davis, Horn, Gonzalez, Schrader, Wagner and Torres Small,

The undersigned organizations representing consumers, family members, mental health and addiction providers, advocates, and other stakeholders would like to express our strong support for the bipartisan Health Care Protection Act (H.R. 6810).

The COVID-19 national emergency has led to historic job loss in the U.S. with 38.6 million Americans filing for unemployment insurance as of May 15. Economists estimate that 16.2 million workers have lost their employer-provided health insurance. Although there are options for acquiring new coverage through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace or applying for Medicaid, these options can mean a change in covered benefits, provider networks, and/or restarting a deductible.

Moreover, job loss is associated with increased depression, anxiety, distress and low self-esteem and may lead to higher rates of substance use disorder and suicide. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 47 million U.S. adults reported having a mental illness in the past year and 17 million adults and 3 million adolescents had a major depressive episode in the past year. Research has shown large-scale disasters, whether traumatic, natural, or environmental are almost always accompanied by increases in depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use disorder, a broad range of other mental and behavioral disorders, domestic violence, and child abuse. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003 left the country with increases in PTSD, stress, and psychological distress in patients and clinicians.

As COBRA coverage is prohibitively expensive, the bipartisan Health Care Protection Act would provide critical subsidies to COBRA eligible individuals for six months. Subsidies would be equal to the employer contribution if the employee were still employed. Additionally, the legislation includes a special ACA open

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4 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
enrollment period for anyone not enrolled in health insurance to provide another pathway for Americans to
gain coverage during this unprecedented time.

Thank you for your leadership in pushing your Congressional colleagues to maintain the safety and continuity of health care for individuals and families. We look forward to working with you to protect Americans access to affordable and comprehensive health care during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

2020 Mom
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Association of Suicidology
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Mental Health Counselors Association
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
Clinical Social Work Association
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Education Development Center
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Innerwisdom, Inc.*
International OCD Foundation
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Eating Disorders Association
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Postpartum Support International
Psychotherapy Action Network
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association of America
SMART Recovery
The Kennedy Forum
The Trevor Project
*Denotes a non-MHLG member