



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

June 25, 2019

The Honorable Richard E. Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways & Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways & Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for legislation that your committee will be considering on Wednesday, June 26, 2019.

We are pleased to support H.R. 3417, the Beneficiary Education Tools, Telehealth, and Extenders Reauthorization (BETTER) Act of 2019. The provisions of the BETTER Act will give our country's seniors better access to health care services through Medicare and improve the quality of those services.

In particular, we are pleased that section 103 of the BETTER Act would expand Medicare coverage for mental health services through the use of telehealth. Access to mental and behavioral health services is a serious issue currently facing the U.S. health care system. Supportive and readily available mental health services are an essential part of holistic, person-centered and effective health care. The BETTER Act will make it possible for Medicare beneficiaries to receive mental health counselling sessions by telehealth, and to receive those services in their homes. We also appreciate the inclusion of section 201 which will give relief to hospitals that inadvertently set low, permanent, full-time equivalent graduate medical education (GME) caps by accepting rotating residents.

We also support section 5 in H.R. 3429, The HEARTS and Rural Relief Act. This would extend for two years the moratorium on enforcing the direct supervision requirements for outpatient therapeutic services with respect to critical access hospitals and small rural hospitals, and apply the moratorium to services provided in 2017. Rural hospitals are facing enormous challenges and the relief provided by this provision will help to ensure that rural communities have access to critical medical services.

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Finally, we would like to express our support for the bill before you that would instruct the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute to include substance abuse (including opioid use disorders), mental health and maternal morbidity and mortality as national priorities research.

Thank you for this opportunity to express our support for this legislation. We look forward to working with you and all Members of Congress to improve the ability of Medicare to provide access to quality health care services. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO