



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

July 15, 2020

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone and Ranking Member Walden:

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 of several bills related to behavioral and child health, as well as initiatives to strengthen care for Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. These bipartisan bills align with *Our Vision for U.S. Health Care* and the specific principal calling for health care to be wellness and prevention oriented, to improve the health of individuals, families and communities.

Simplifying enrollment and coordinating benefits and care in the Medicare and Medicaid programs are important components to achieve optimal health for beneficiaries. We strongly support the following two bills being marked up:

- H.R. 2477, the "*Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act of 2019*" which would modernize and simplify the Medicare Part B enrollment process as recommended by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC).
- H.R. 3935, the "*Protecting Patients Transportation to Care Act*" which would amend the Medicaid statute to include non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) in the list of mandatory Medicaid benefits by codifying current Medicaid NEMT regulations.

We also support programs and policies that improve the health and well-being of children. The following two bills help advance child health through critical investments:

- H.R. 2271, the "*Scarlett's Sunshine on Sudden Unexpected Death Act*" would strengthen existing efforts to better understand Sudden Unexplained Death in Childhood (SUDC) and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), facilitate data collection and analysis to improve prevention efforts, and support children and families.
- H.R. 2468, the "*School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act*" which would encourage schools receiving asthma-related grants to have trained personnel and a comprehensive school-based allergies and asthma management program.

Lastly, we thank the Committee for its commitment towards strengthening behavioral health and promoting policies to reduce suicide in our society. Catholic health providers are inspired by the social teachings of the Church, which affirm that each person is created in the image of God; that each human life is sacred and possesses inalienable worth; and that health care is essential to

promoting and protecting the inherent dignity of every individual. We also recognize that supportive and readily available mental health services and substance use disorder treatments are essential facets of holistic, person-centered and effective health care. We strongly support the following life-affirming bills:

- H.R. 5201, the "*Telemental Health Expansion Act of 2019*" would permanently include a patient's home as an eligible originating site for mental health services delivered via telehealth in the Medicare program.
- H.R. 7539, the "*Strengthening Behavioral Parity Act*" contains numerous provisions to improve existing law, most notable prohibiting health insurance plans from imposing less favorable benefit limitations on mental and substance use disorder treatments than on medical and surgical benefits.
- H.R. 1646, the "*Helping Emergency Responders Overcome (HERO) Act of 2019*" which would support the mental health of our first responders by authorizing grants for peer support behavioral health and wellness programs within fire departments and emergency medical service agencies.
- H.R. 4564, the "*Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act of 2019*" would significantly increase the funding levels for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline while also directing HHS to conduct research and analysis on best practices to ensure continued success of the program.
- H.R. 4585, the "*Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act*" would direct HHS, in coordination with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), to carry out a national suicide prevention media campaign to advertise the new 9-8-8 number, when it becomes effective, raise awareness for suicide prevention resources, and cultivate a more effective discourse on how to prevent suicide.
- H.R. 5619, the "*Suicide Prevention Act*", would establish grant programs at the CDC and SAMHSA to prevent self-harm and suicide to be awarded to public health departments and to hospital emergency departments.
- H.R. 4194, the "*National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2019*" which amends the Communications Act to designate 9-8-8 as the universal dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

As the country continues to fight this pandemic, we appreciate that the Committee remains committed to addressing other longstanding public health priorities. CHA and its members remain on the front lines in our communities providing critical and compassionate health care. Thank you for your important work and for allowing us to register support for these bills.

Sincerely,


Sr. Mary Haddad, RSM
President and CEO

CC: Members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee