

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
House Committee on Appropriations
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education
and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

Thank you for appropriating \$35 million in new funding for the Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG) to initiate crisis care programming in every state during consideration of HR 2740 last year. We strongly urge you sustain your steadfast leadership by continuing to support crisis care programming by adding \$35 million for states to pursue this crucial initiative in the FY2021 Labor Health and Human Services bill, bringing total MHBG appropriations to \$757.5 million.

According to a Trust for America's Health/Well Being study of CDC data released in early March 2019, more than 150,000 Americans died from alcohol and drug-induced fatalities or suicide in 2017. Nearly a third of these deaths – more than 47,000 – were suicides. Combined, these causes of death were responsible for taking the lives of twice as many Americans as they did in 1999. Across the country, the most common response to patients suffering from mental health issues or substance use disorders is directing them to community hospital emergency rooms and law enforcement. In addition to being inefficient and costly, neither ERs or the judicial system enable patients with SUDs or mental health issues to receive the most appropriate care for their mental health issues. Arizona, Colorado and Georgia have established county-based crisis response systems, and strong evidence indicates that those systems have improved the ability to deliver timely and appropriate care.

County governments in these and other states are seeking to transform the way they provide crisis services through an evidence-based approach with three basic components. First, high-tech crisis call centers coordinate a real-time, immediate response, leveraging data for performance improvement and accountability across systems of care. Second, 24/7 mobile crisis units offer outreach and support, travelling to individuals in crisis which minimizes transportation complications and costs. Third, crisis stabilization programs offer short-term “sub-acute” care for individuals who need support and observation, avoiding costly hospital emergency department holds and unnecessary medical inpatient stays. Finally, a set of principles and best practices guiding crisis care delivery include a recovery orientation, trauma-informed care, significant use of peer staff, a commitment to Zero Suicide/Suicide Safer Care, strong commitments to safety for

consumers and staff, and collaboration with law enforcement personnel who, when called to respond, provide a safe hand-off to crisis response personnel.

The FY 2020 House Labor/HHS Appropriations bill proposed a mechanism to fund crisis care programs in every state. Specifically, the bill included a five percent set-aside in the Mental Health Block Grant and an equivalent boost in funding to support programs that address the needs of people with serious mental disorders including children with mental and emotional disturbances. The accompanying committee report language, taken directly from last year's bill, gives states and territories the discretion to finance some or all of the core elements described above, within an evidence-based framework for delivering crisis services to persons at immediate suicide risk.

With the staggering suicide crisis the country currently faces, I ask that you prioritize this increase and modest 5 percent set-aside for crisis care within the FY2021 MHBG, helping states enhance care for these highly vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



SUSAN WILD
Member of Congress



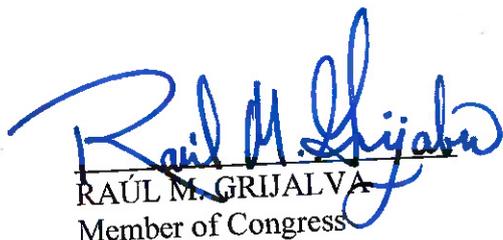
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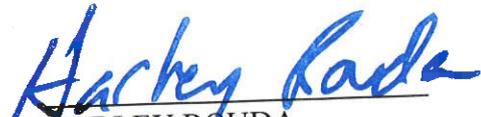
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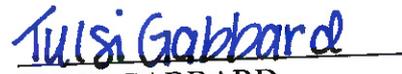

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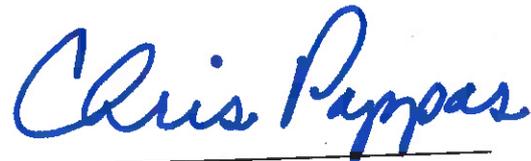

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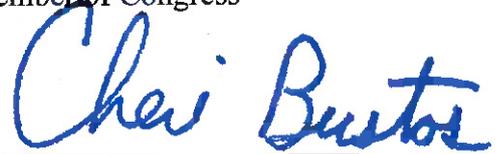
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