October 7, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  The Honorable Richard Burr
Chair  Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor, Senate Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions Committee and Pensions Committee
154 Russell Senate Office Building 217 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden  The Honorable Mike Crapo
Chair  Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance Senate Committee on Finance
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building 239 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Chair Wyden, Ranking Member Burr, and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the American Psychological Association (APA) Services, the nation’s largest scientific
and professional nonprofit organization representing the discipline and profession of psychology,
thank you for the bipartisan work of your respective committees throughout the year to develop
policies to support the mental and behavioral health workforce, facilitate equitable access to mental
and behavioral health services, and encourage adoption of innovative forms of mental and behavioral
health treatment. As the 117th Congress draws to a close, we urge you to finish this work by passing
comprehensive legislation to address our nation’s mental health crisis.

Although the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic is beginning to wind down, the need for
access to quality, evidence-based mental and behavioral health treatment is as high as ever. In the
first year of the pandemic alone, global prevalence of anxiety and depression rose by 25%¹; in the
U.S., children and adults likewise experienced higher stress levels and higher rates of unhealthy
behaviors commonly associated with anxiety or depression, such as changes in sleep patterns and
increased alcohol consumption.² Almost three out of four Americans report feeling overwhelmed by
the number of crises facing the world right now.³

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¹ World Health Organization (March 2, 2022), COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety
and depression worldwide, retrieved from: https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-

² American Psychological Association (March 2021), Stress in America: One Year Later, A New Wave of Pandemic

³ American Psychological Association (March 2022), Stress in America: Money, Inflation, War Pile On to Nation
2022-survival-mode.
The mental and behavioral health impacts of the pandemic and subsequent events are having a disproportionate impact on minority and underserved communities that have traditionally lacked access to mental and behavioral health services, as evidenced by worse health outcomes and higher rates of suicidal ideation and substance use amongst these communities. Now is a critical time for Congress to act to both meet the current moment of heightened demand for mental and behavioral health services and to remedy longstanding disparities in access to treatment.

There are several initiatives within your respective committees we believe are critical to achieving these goals, including reauthorizing and expanding key behavioral health workforce programs; expanding access to mental health treatment in schools; achieving parity in reimbursement for mental health services; improving access to evidence-based models of integrated primary and behavioral health care; supporting advanced psychology trainees; eliminating unnecessary barriers to psychological services in all Medicare treatment settings; and ensuring continued access to mental and behavioral health services furnished via telehealth. As a reference, attached is a document outlining the proposals we believe must be included as part of a final package. Psychologists will be meeting with Senators serving on your committees in the coming weeks to convey the paramount importance of Congress passing a comprehensive package of mental and behavioral health legislation before the end of the year.

Thank you again for your leadership in devoting substantial committee time and resources to examining policy responses to the meet this crisis. We look forward to discussing these issues with you and working together to finalize this crucial legislation. Please feel free to contact Kenneth Polishchuk (KPolishchuk@apa.org) or Andrew Strickland (ASTrickland@apa.org) if any further information or clarification is needed.

Sincerely,

Katherine B. McGuire
Chief Advocacy Officer

CC
Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY)
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD)
Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)
Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-SC)
Members of the Senate HELP Committee
Members of the Senate Finance Committee