



March 22, 2018

Dear Maryland Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty association representing over 37,800 psychiatric physicians nationwide, and the Maryland Psychiatric Society, an organization representing 700 psychiatric physicians in Maryland, we write to urge you to join us in an open dialogue about mental illness which affects one in five people in this nation. We need to come together and look for bipartisan solutions that ensure early intervention and access to mental health and substance use treatment.

With the scientific advances in prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery today, we should be moving forward in caring for people with mental illness and substance abuse. Despite increased public awareness about mental health issues, accessing treatment remains a challenging task due to multiple factors, such as fragmented delivery and reimbursement systems, regulatory barriers, and workforce shortages. We must also work together to create more public education and awareness to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illnesses as we did for persons with HIV/AIDS and cancer in the past.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss ways to:

- Enforce the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, to ensure that health insurance coverage provides timely access to a full range of mental health and substance use disorder providers and services. These efforts must explicitly remedy/redress the discrimination against mental health providers and their patients that has resulted in the documented shortages of these providers participating in health insurance plans, which is a significant barrier to consumers accessing their coverage.
- Improve access to quality mental health and substance use services by addressing workforce shortages; implementing evidence-based, innovative health care delivery models; and ensuring adequate funding so that communities have available a continuum of outpatient and inpatient services, including treatment options for people in crisis.
- Invest in research to improve early detection and intervention for mental illnesses through translational studies, which will help us turn preclinical and clinical research insights and discoveries into new diagnostics and therapeutics that meaningfully impact patients' lives.

The American Psychiatric Association and the members of the Maryland Psychiatric Society stand ready to work with you to achieve these goals, on behalf of the thousands of constituents in Maryland.

If you have any questions, please contact Ashley Mild, APA Interim Chief of Government Relations, at amild@psych.org or (202) 559-3913, or Heidi Bunes, Executive Director of the Maryland Psychiatric Society, at mps@mdpsych.org and (410) 625-0232.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Saul Levin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A.
CEO and Medical Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Palmer MD". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jennifer T. Palmer, MD
President, Maryland Psychiatric Society