

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable A. Mitchell McConnell, Jr.
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader McConnell and Senate Minority Leader Schumer:

As you continue to negotiate further stimulus packages during this pandemic, we ask that you include long-term funding for and an expansion to the Certified Community Behavioral Health Center program. These facilities provide evidence-based mental health services to thousands of individuals a year at an affordable rate. At a time when our community's pandemic response relies on social distancing and isolation, it is important to ensure that our mental health care infrastructure is strong enough to respond to those needs.

CCBHCs provide nine types of services grounded on evidence-based practices: crisis mental health services; screening, assessment, and diagnosis (including risk assessment); patient-centered treatment planning; outpatient mental health and substance use services; primary care screening and monitoring of key health indicators/health risk; targeted case management; psychiatric rehab services, peer support and family supports; intensive, community-based mental health care for members of the armed forces and veterans. CCBHCs have increased staff in order to serve every person who comes to them, regardless of ability to pay. On average, they have hired 46 new staff per each location totaling 3,000 new staff in 2018.

CCBHCs are required to provide immediate screening and risk assessment for mental health and addictions. They offer basic primary care needs within 10 days or less. 68% of CCBHCs decreased patient wait times in the first year, 46% provided same day access to care and 30% kept wait times consistent despite increases in patient caseloads. After an initial call or referral, 78% of CCBHCs could offer a follow-up appointment within a week or less.

All CCBHCs offer 24/7 access to crisis care, including mobile crisis teams. They work with law enforcement and schools and hospitals to reduce ER visits. Since 2016, CCBHCs have reduced ER visits by 61%. They have also contributed to a 60% decrease in time spend in jails and a 41% decrease in homelessness according to HHS where they have opened. They have also employed telemedicine programs liberally throughout the initial demonstration. CCBHCs have the unique expertise of delivering psychiatric and mental health care through telehealth, which is critical as we resort to social distancing to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

These institutions also offer tailored care for active duty military and veterans. As the ability for these groups to interact in community settings, there's a possibility that we can see losses in the progress we've made so far in combatting veteran suicide. 72% of CCBHCs provide services to veterans a 64% have expanded services to veterans.

As a whole, CCBHCs have been nothing but overwhelmingly beneficial to every community that they have come to including ours and any disruption in their services could prove catastrophic at a time when our healthcare system must be wholeheartedly focused on treating and preventing the spread of a pandemic. It is critical for our state and at least a dozen others that this program receive long term funding and an overall expansion.

Sincerely,

Kendra S. Horn
Member of Congress

Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

CC: Chair Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member Tom Cole