

March 28, 2019

Representative Brian Babin
U.S. House of Representatives
2236 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Marco Rubio
U.S. Senate
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Val Demings
U.S. House of Representatives
217 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Thom Tillis
U.S. Senate
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Kyrsten Sinema
U.S. Senate
825B&C Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representatives Babin and Demings and Senators Rubio, Sinema, and Tillis:

The undersigned organizations, members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) and representing the mental health and substance use disorder community, are pleased to support your bipartisan and bicameral legislation, “The Threat Assessment, Prevention, and Safety (TAPS) Act of 2019 (H.R.838/S.265).” Your legislation is an excellent first step toward addressing our shared concern about increasing violence in our communities.

It is our understanding that your legislation creates a multidisciplinary national task force of experts who will work in a public-private partnership to recommend national guidelines for behavior-based threat assessment and management and to support communities. The purpose of your legislation is laudable – to engage these national experts and community leaders to develop guidelines to share information about potential threats, without threatening patient privacy or individual rights. We are especially pleased that the legislation does not perpetuate the myth that people with mental illness are those most likely to perpetuate societal violence and that the legislation does not otherwise stigmatize those with mental illness.

As mental health professionals, we believe that your legislation is stronger because it includes collaboration and consultation with mental health service professionals with clinical experience to advise the national strategy. We stand ready to work with you to share our expertise and advice. While there is no absolute way to predict all violent behavior, we applaud the goal of seeking to identify imminent threats and seek proper action, often including social services or sometimes mental health interventions. These provisions evidence your clear intention to respect and engage mental health professionals, where appropriate, to proactively seek to prevent threats of imminent violence.

For these reasons, we strongly support “The Threat Assessment, Prevention, and Safety (TAPS) Act of 2019 (H.R.838/S.265)” and offer our assistance in moving these bills to final passage. Please call upon any of our organizations to help you in these efforts.

Sincerely yours,

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
NAMI, National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Sandy Hook Promise
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN)
Treatment Communities of America