



New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
Champions for Transforming Lives and Health Systems

August 31, 2021

**FY 2022
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The Honorable Frank Pallone
US House of Representatives
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Pallone:

I am writing not only on behalf of New Jersey's Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) (signatories below), but for all New Jersey residents in need of mental health and substance use disorder treatment and supports, as well as those across the country, to urge you to include the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Act of 2021 (Excellence Act) in the budget reconciliation package that is currently being prepared for markup.

New Jersey now has twenty CCBHCs, seven that are part of the demonstration program and 13 established with expansion grants. Organizations participating in the demonstration program, which is currently only open to ten states, have proven the positive impact they have on communities. Their comprehensive, integrated, collaborative model of care has improved access, equity and outcomes. They, and expansion grant programs, need fiscal stability to ensure not only continuity of care, but to support continued innovation and expansion which cannot go forward when year to year funding is not assured.

When CCBHCs first were developed in 2017, they were hailed as the service delivery model of the future. They have lived up to the expectations, providing a full continuum of care available 24/7 for adults and children regardless of ability to pay that ranges from detox and mental health crisis services to care management assistance with social determinants of health (SDOH) and everything in between. Among the SDOH is health care access and quality. Individuals with serious mental health and substance use disorders have acute co-morbidities that demand integration of primary health care and coordination of specialty care. Case management to assist with other SDOH, such as employment, housing, nutrition, transportation, and education is also a crucial element of sustained recovery. The CCBHCs, with enhanced electronic health record capabilities and extensive community collaborations, deliver all of this. CCBHCs reduce hospitalizations and Emergency Department visits as well as incarceration rates. They are relieving some of the burden experienced by our law enforcement officers. And they are

Advocacy

Collaboration

Innovation

Education



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bringing much-needed healthcare to people who might not have been able to access it otherwise.

Federal funding for the demonstration program was extended for three years in December 2020, but that offers limited stability and only to those operating under the demonstration program. Given the history of funding lapses over the past few years and the risk of discontinued funding for expansion grant programs, The Excellence Act is needed to allow every state to establish, expand and sustain CCBHCs and to ensure continued substantial funding for expansion grants.

We are grateful for your ongoing support of behavioral health services and ask that you support incorporating the Excellence Act into the reconciliation bill.

Thank you for your consideration and all you do for New Jersey.

With warmest regards,

Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D.
President and CEO
NJAMHAA