

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
United States Senate  
260 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Blunt:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses, and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) writes in strong support of the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act (S. 824). Your bipartisan legislation would renew and expand an innovative demonstration program that expands access to treatment of mental illnesses and substance use disorders through community-based clinics.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) estimates that more than half of adults with any mental illness and approximately one-third of adults with serious mental illness (SMI) did not receive treatment in 2017. Additionally, according to SAMHSA, in 2016, only 10 percent of the 21 million people age 12 or older who needed substance use treatment received treatment at a specialty facility. The opioid crisis, which is estimated to cost nearly 42,000 American lives each year, has exacerbated the need to expand treatment capacity.

To increase access to care, Congress, in Section 223 of the Protecting Access to Medicare Act (PAMA), authorized demonstration programs in up to eight states to improve community behavioral health services through certified community behavioral health clinics (CCBHCs), a new comprehensive treatment model that launched in 2017. These clinics provide a range of essential mental health and substance use disorder treatment services, including cognitive behavioral therapy, trauma-informed care and medication-assisted treatment (MAT).

In the initial SAMHSA report to Congress on this program, the agency estimated that the 67 CCBHCs will serve “more than 380,000 individuals across 372 locations in 190 counties.” SAMHSA also noted that “a final report with recommendations for



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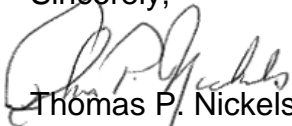
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continuation, expansion, modification, or termination of demonstration projects under Section 223 will be submitted to Congress no later than December 2021.” However, statutory authority for the CCBHC program will end in June 2019 unless Congress acts.

Your timely legislation would renew the CCBHC demonstration program in the original eight states (Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon and Pennsylvania) for two years and expand it to 11 additional states, enabling current patients to continue receiving comprehensive care, and increasing the number of individuals with access to vital services.

We commend you for introducing the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act and look forward to working with you to secure its enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas P. Nickels", written over the printed name.

Thomas P. Nickels  
Executive Vice President