

American Association of
Child & Adolescent
Psychiatry

September 15, 2020

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas
2438 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0529

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4330

Dear Representatives Cárdenas and Johnson:

On behalf of the medical students, residents, fellows, and physician members of the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), I write in support of the Strengthening Mental Health Supports for BIPOC Communities Act. If enacted, this bill would strengthen the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant Program by requiring reporting on how grant funds have been used to deliver services and expand outreach to racial and ethnic minority communities.

Though incidence of mental illness is similar for children and adolescents across racial and ethnic groups, youth in black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities' access mental health treatment at consistently lower rates than their white counterparts. There are many reasons this disparity persists, including stigma associated with issues of mental health and mistrust of the health care system within minority communities. Additionally, a shortage of providers, including child and adolescent psychiatrists, and a lack of diversity within the mental health workforce, pose further barriers to care.

As a result of existing inequities, historically underserved and minority communities have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The mental health toll of this ongoing public health crisis is, as of now, immeasurable. The Strengthening Mental Health Supports for BIPOC Communities Act, appropriately focuses on addressing mental health disparities at a critical time. By bolstering the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant, this bill will direct federal funding to essential work within BIPOC communities, such as expanding access to culturally competent and linguistically appropriate mental health services, and engaging communities, families, and caregivers in awareness and prevention programs.

AACAP applauds your commitment to reducing mental health disparities in BIPOC communities. We look forward to working together to advance this legislation and future opportunities to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents.

AACAP is the professional home to America's child and adolescent psychiatrists. Our mission includes promoting the healthy development of children, adolescents, and families. Please contact Cynthia Whitney, MPA, our Deputy Director of Congressional and Political Affairs, for more information cwhitney@aacap.org.

Sincerely,



Gabrielle A. Carlson, MD
President
American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
3615 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016-3007
www.aacap.org