



# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

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April 26, 2021

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1610 Longworth  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Napolitano:

We are writing in strong support of H.R. 2611, the Increasing Behavioral Health Treatment Act, because it will remove the Medicaid Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion for states that have submitted a plan to increase access to outpatient and community-based behavioral health care; increase availability of crisis stabilization services; and improve data sharing and coordination between physical health, mental health, and addiction treatment providers and first-responders.

Within the U.S. health care system, there continues to be significant gaps in coverage for the treatment of serious mental illnesses. Over the last few decades, there have been efforts to address these disparities, including through the parity of health and mental health insurance benefits. Many of the efforts have been successful in bringing about positive changes; however, there is still a significant gap in coverage for low-income people who are in need of inpatient or residential mental health treatment as a result of the long-standing Medicaid IMD exclusion.

The Medicaid Institutions for Mental Disease exclusion was built into the foundation of the Medicaid program in 1965. Consequently, states are prohibited from receiving Medicaid payments for adults, ages 21 to 64, receiving treatment in an IMD. An IMD is a hospital, nursing facility, or other institution of more than 16 beds that is primarily focused on treating mental illness, including substance use disorder. IMD facilities can be either secured (locked), limiting the outward movement of clients, or they can be open (unlocked) and allow the free movement of clients throughout the surrounding community; the IMD exclusion makes no distinction. This rule exists, in part, to encourage the delivery of behavioral health care outside of large institutions, but it has inadvertently resulted in contributing to a serious shortage of mental health care treatment beds.

Los Angeles County is committed to providing individuals with the most appropriate care in the most appropriate setting, and the IMD exclusion limits the County's ability to

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develop needed inpatient and residential care for those with serious mental illness. Far too often, individuals who need IMD care instead experience repeat hospitalizations, homelessness, and episodes of incarceration.

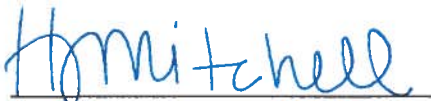
H.R. 2611, the Increasing Behavioral Health Treatment Act, addresses this longstanding problem by removing the IMD exclusion in a responsible way, ensuring states can develop needed IMD care while also holding them accountable for developing a robust community-based outpatient care continuum in tandem.

We appreciate your leadership on this important issue.

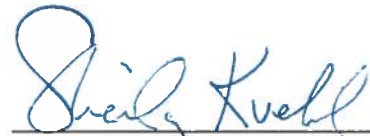
Sincerely,



HILDA L. SOLIS  
Chair of the Board  
Supervisor, First District



HOLLY J. MITCHELL  
Supervisor, Second District



SHEILA KUEHL  
Supervisor, Third District



JANICE HAHN  
Supervisor, Fourth District



KATHRYN BARGER  
Supervisor, Fifth District

c: Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation