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July 21, 2021

Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
2107 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics

Dear Congressman Pallone,

Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) have dramatically increased access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment for the people of New Jersey. In doing so, they have expanded our states' capacity to address the suicide and overdose crisis and established innovative partnerships with law enforcement, schools and hospitals to improve care, reduce recidivism and prevent hospital readmissions.

NJBIA is an advocate for expanding access to mental health and addiction treatment services. The recent COVID pandemic and ongoing health crisis it produced has brought the mental health needs of employees in the workforce to the forefront.

Because of these concerns, we at NJBIA are writing to urge your support for the bipartisan Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Act of 2021. The Excellence Act would allow every state to join the innovative Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program and authorize much-needed investments in the model for current and future CCBHCs.

The national average length of time between a client's first outreach or referral until their first mental health or substance use appointment is 48 days—a wait that can literally be a lifetime. By contrast, half of the surveyed CCBHCs provide same-day access to care and 84% see clients within one week.

There are currently 15 CCBHCs in New Jersey, and five more coming online due to recent grant awards. To make these benefits more widely available, CCBHCs need to be solidified and expanded.

On behalf of our membership, we are writing to ask for your support of the bipartisan Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Act of 2021. If enacted by Congress, it would give every state the opportunity to apply to participate in the CCBHC program and receive funding to expand high-quality mental health and substance use services. It would also give much needed financial certainty to existing CCBHCs operating in New Jersey.

The Excellence Act is one of those rare pieces of legislation that is truly bipartisan, and we have a window of opportunity to get it done. That's why I'm urging you to support The Excellence Act now.

Thank you for all that you do for the residents of the Garden State.

If you have any questions, please contact me at cbuteas@njbja.org, or at 908-344-3466.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chrissy Buteas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chrissy Buteas
Chief Government Affairs Officer