



## [Over 160 Organizations Urge Congress to Promptly Enact the Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act](#)

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson  
Speaker United States House of Representatives  
2468 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries  
Minority Leader United States House of Representatives  
2433 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

[Letter also attached as a PDF](#)

**February 6, 2024**

**Re: Request to Enact the *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act* this Congress**

To: Majority Leader Schumer, House Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leaders McConnell and Jeffries:

The International Transformational Resilience Coalition, and more than 160 other organizations listed at the end of this letter, request that Congress enact HR 3073/S 1452, the bi-partisan *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act* during this Congress. This urgently needed new legislation will expand our nation's approach to mental health by supporting and funding community-based initiatives that use a public health approach to prevent and heal mental health, behavioral health, and psychosocial problems resulting from accelerating toxic stresses, emergencies, and disasters.

In addition to the 160 plus organizations that have endorsed the *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act*, last summer and fall the ITRC hosted two virtual Congressional Briefings on the legislation that both Democratic and Republican members of the House spoke at. Over 1,400 people from across the US registered for each briefing, which indicates widespread interest in the legislation.

The *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act* was introduced by co-leads Representatives Paul Tonko (D-NY) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), along with original co-sponsors Don Bacon (R-NE), Mary Peltola (D-AK) and Kathy Castor (D-FL). They have since been joined by co-sponsors David Valadao (R-CA), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Morgan McGarvey (D-KY), Shri Thanedar (D-MI), Donald Davis (D-NC), David Trone (D-MD), Ann Kuster (D-NH), Troy Carter (D-LA), Haley Stevens (D-MI), Brittany Petterson (D-CO), Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Jerrold Nader (D-NY), Andrea Salinas (D-OR), Susan Wild (D-PA), Alma Adams (D-NC), Terri Sewell (D-AL),

Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (MI At-Large), Melanie Ann Stansbury (D-NM), Gerald Connolly (D-VA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D DC-At-Large), Jill Tokuda (D-HI), Josh Harder (D-CA), and Becca Balint (D-VT). A companion bill, S 1452, was introduced in the Senate by Senators Ed Markey (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

The *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act* is urgently needed because mental health problems are at epidemic levels today nationwide and constitute a public health emergency. According to Mental Health America, in 2022 almost 20 percent of adults, or nearly 50 million Americans, experienced a diagnosed mental illness and 5 percent had a severe mental illness. In addition, a 2022 CDC survey found that overall, 37 percent of students at public and private high schools reported poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression. A poll by the American Psychiatric Association found that 53 percent of adults with children under 18 said they are concerned about the mental state of their children.

The record heatwaves, droughts, wind, rain, and snowstorms, hurricanes, floods, wildfires, hazardous smoke events, and other severe stresses, emergencies and disasters the US is experiencing are aggravating these problems and creating many new ones. In 2021 more than 40 percent of Americans lived in a county that was impacted by a major disaster. The events can traumatize 20-40 percent of those who are directly impacted, 10-20 percent of disaster response workers, and 5-10 percent of the general population who are not directly affected but know someone who is or view the events from afar. Consequently, the number of people who experience a mental health problem as a result of a disaster often outweighs those with physical injuries by 40 to 1.

Mental health services are essential. However, they do not prevent psychological and emotional distresses or traumas by strengthening the capacity for mental wellness and resilience. In addition, there will never be enough providers to assist all of the individuals who now experience mental health struggles. The number of people needing assistance will only grow as more toxic stresses, emergencies, and disasters occur.

The only viable way to reduce today's epidemic of mental health struggles, and prevent future ones, is to actively engage communities in using a public health approach to strengthen the capacity for mental wellness and resilience among all residents for all types of toxic stresses, emergencies, and disasters.

A public health approach to mental wellness and resilience focuses on the *entire population*, including but not limited to high-risk individuals and those with symptoms of pathology.

It prioritizes *preventing* psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems before they occur, not merely treating them after they appear, and in many cases integrates mostly group and community-minded methods to *heal* traumas into the prevention methods.

A public health approach to mental wellness and resilience accomplishes these goals by actively engaging residents in activities that strengthen *protective factors*—social support networks, local resources, trauma and resilience-informed knowledge and skills, and other assets—that enable them to

buffer themselves from the forces that undermine their wellness and resilience and find new meaning, purpose, and hope in adversities.

From the [Healthy and Resilient Communities Initiative](#) in North Carolina to [Peace4Tarpon](#) in Florida and the [Community Resilience Initiative](#) in Washington State, numerous community-based mental wellness and resilience building initiatives are underway throughout the U.S. They have shown that by engaging local residents and organizations in implementing a range of age and culturally-tailored strategies, community becomes medicine for psychological, emotional, and behavioral problems.

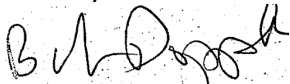
The top problem almost all of the initiatives have struggled with, however, is securing start-up funds. This makes it very difficult for new initiatives to get organized. Many also struggle to secure ongoing operational funds, which diminishes their effectiveness or causes some to close.

The support and funding provided by *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act* will address these problems by providing both planning grants to enable local initiatives to get organized, and program grants to support the ongoing operations of community-based initiatives as well as a technical assistance program to help communities develop grant proposals and learn from each other.

It is important to note that, because our bodies and minds are not separate, there is significant co-morbidity between mental health and physical health problems. This means that social, psychological, and emotional problems often aggravate existing, or can directly cause physical health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and mor. Using a public health approach in communities to prevent and heal mental health, behavioral health, and psychosocial problems will therefore also help reduce physical health problems, which can help reduce the pressures on the nation's health care system.

For these reasons the organizations below that endorse the legislation, and the International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC), urge you to expand our nation's approach to preventing and healing mental health and psychosocial problems by enacting the *Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act* this year.

Thank you for considering this request.



Bob Doppelt  
Coordinator

International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)

## **Organizational Endorsers of HR 3017/S 1452 *The Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act***

International Transformational Resilience Coalition  
National Association of State Mental Health Directors  
National Alliance of Mental illness (NAMI)  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Mental Health America  
American Public Health Association  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Rural Health Association  
Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health  
Rural Opportunity Institute  
National Association of Regional Councils  
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National League for Nursing  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
National Association of Community Health Workers  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Save the Children  
National Federation of Families  
American Association on Health and Disability  
The Jed Foundation  
National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve Lives  
International Society for Psychiatric Nurses  
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
Alliance for Positive Health  
Rural Health Network of SCNY  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
American Lung Association  
Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU)  
Congressional Research Institute for Social Work and Policy  
National Association of School Psychologists  
Psychotherapy Action Network  
Trauma & Resilience Initiative Inc.  
Unitarian Universalist Mental Health Network  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments  
American Association on Health and Disability  
Clinical Social Work Association  
National Compadres Network  
The Kennedy Forum  
The Resiliency Group  
Community Resilience Initiative  
Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative  
Trauma Resource Institute  
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy & Practice  
Interfaith Power & Light  
Climate Mental Health Network  
New Leaf Counseling LLC  
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Whatcom Family & Community Network  
International OCD Foundation  
UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center  
Mental Health America of the Palm Beaches  
American Family Therapy Academy, Inc.  
American Counseling Association  
Health Care Without Harm  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Prevention Institute  
Peace4Tarpon  
Start Early  
Birch Bay-Blaine Thrives  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine Chapter  
The Resiliency Initiative  
Beaver Hollow  
Metta Foundation  
Lieberman Group, Inc.  
Jen Johnson, MS, MFA, LCMHC  
NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action  
Resilience Climbing  
Sabater Laboratory for Psychological Innovations Inc  
Able-Differently  
Reaching Resiliency  
Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action  
One Shared Spirit  
Seneca County Community Schools  
Trauma Healing Project  
Emory University's Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing  
Visible Hands Collaborative  
The Children's Agenda  
American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare  
Earthday.org  
Climate Resilience Leadership, LLC  
SolaVida  
MUYUMPA - Centro de Formación en Terapia Comunitaria  
Thinkwell, LLC.  
Lieberman Group, Inc.  
Win Climate  
Climate Psychology Alliance - North America  
Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies  
Jennifer G. Gordon PhD PC  
Organic Intelligence  
The Blueford Group  
Beaver Hollow  
Trauma & Resilience Inc.  
Climate Resilience Fund  
Lakeshore Foundation  
Glenn County Office of Education  
Columbia Resilience  
KLBRI  
BasicNeeds US, Inc.  
Vermont Climate and Health Alliance  
CAN Climate Action Net  
Climate Generation  
Rising Communities (formerly Community Health Councils)  
United Way of the Columbia Willamette  
Truly Well  
Resources for Resilience  
Good Grief Network  
Towson Therapy Group  
Prevent Child Abuse New York

Family Focused Treatment Association  
Resilience United  
Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative  
Committee for Children  
Resilient Brunswick County  
Inseparable  
Afterschool Alliance  
18th Street Arts Center  
Indivisible ReSisters Walnut Creek  
ecoAmerica  
Post Carbon Institute  
Futures Without Violence  
Aloka Earth Room  
Moms Clean Air Force  
Finger Lakes Community Schools  
350 Eugene  
Climate Psychiatry Alliance  
The Resilient Activist  
Generation Up (GENup)  
EcoInfluencer Academy  
Trauma Informed Oregon  
Climate Health Now  
Generation Up (GENup)  
RI International  
Trauma-informed Hampshire County  
Restore Hope

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility  
RIMYA Services  
Our Climate  
Community Resilience Research  
Susanne Moser Research & Consulting  
MENTOR Youth Development  
The Family Focused Treatment Association  
The Center for Mind-Body Medicine  
Triple P America - Positive Parenting Program  
100% Chaves County Initiative  
Full Circle Florida, Inc.  
Schools for Climate Action  
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Safer Together  
Classic City Mindful Movement  
ACEs Matter, Corp  
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health & Social Justice  
Youth and Women for Change in Eswatini  
Future Focused Education  
Resilient Colorado  
Peace 'In It' Counseling  
Futures Without Violence  
Educational Sustainability Mobilization Inc.  
SabaterLAB Foundation  
Between the Waters  
Participatory Research Consulting