

October 20, 2021

The Honorable Susan M. Collins  
United States Senate  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tina Smith  
United States Senate  
720 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins and Senator Smith:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, 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) is pleased to support your legislation, the Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act.

On the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, America's hospitals and health systems witness firsthand its far-reaching effects on behavioral health. The stress from unemployment or underemployment, isolation due to quarantine or COVID-19 restrictions, and grief over loved ones lost to the pandemic are possible to manifest in increases in already high rates of deaths from suicides and substance use disorder. Beyond COVID-19, we know that as a country to prioritize resources that support the behavioral health needs of the country. These investments will not only help to stymie the wave of unmet demand for behavioral health services that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also improve America's overall health.

As we work to further integrate physical and behavioral health to better address the nation's behavioral health needs, one major obstacle to parity remains in the Medicare program – the 190-day lifetime limit on coverage for certain inpatient psychiatric treatment. With the nation's population aging and an increasing number of seniors and people with disabilities seeking inpatient care to address their behavioral health needs, now is the time to repeal this discriminatory policy and ensure that Medicare beneficiaries can receive necessary inpatient psychiatric care.

We are grateful for your leadership on this issue and stand ready to work with you to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

/s/

Stacey Hughes  
Executive Vice President

