

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman  
United States Senate  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Durbin and Portman:

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 the Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act (S. 3677).

As health care organizations serving as frontline responders to emergencies, hospitals and health systems witness the enduring effects of mass violence, natural disasters and other traumatic events on the health and wellbeing of survivors and the health care workers who come to their aid. In communities across the nation, survivors, in order to secure needed treatment in the aftermath of such crises, must navigate a health care system rife with shortages of mental health providers.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP) directs federal resources to state and local governments to help deliver mental health care in communities that have been declared a major disaster by the President. CCP works with the SAMHSA Center for Mental Health Services to provide technical assistance and training for state and local mental health providers; through two grant programs, it also funds short-term counseling services and support. However, under current law, only areas with *major disaster* declarations, and not those affected by *emergency* declarations, are eligible to benefit from CCP services. This leaves many without the assistance they need.

Your bipartisan bill would expand eligibility for CCP aid to include communities affected by emergency declarations, as well as those in areas declared by the President as major disaster areas; in doing so, your bill will help bolster the nation's public health infrastructure and ensure that more people affected by trauma can receive vital mental health services.



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We thank you for your leadership in highlighting this issue and introducing the Post-Disaster Mental Health Response Act, and we stand ready to work with you to ensure its passage.

Sincerely,

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Lisa Kidder Hrobsky  
Senior Vice President  
Federal Relations, Advocacy and Political Affairs