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April 16, 2020

Elinore McCance-Katz
Administrator
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20852

Administrator McCance-Katz,

Thank you for your leadership overseeing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). I write today to urge SAMHSA to advocate for the mental health needs in my district.

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or CARES Act (PL 116-136), Congress authorized federal funding to meet mental health needs. SAMHSA received \$425 million to help people with mental health and substance use disorders – of those funds, \$250 million is available to behavioral health clinics – especially since the coronavirus has fundamentally changed the nature of medical treatment.

During a time of mandatory quarantines and the increased levels of anxiety, fear, and isolation, Americans must have clear and unencumbered access to mental health sources. Many communities across the country, including those in my District, are experiencing the somber mental health effects of this pandemic: Central Valley suicide hotlines are surging with reports of attempted suicides; while overall crime is declining, domestic violence is growing due to more time spent with aggressors; social distancing is causing setbacks for some veterans coping with depression or Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and seniors who are alone or young students who were on track to graduate and whose dreams have been crushed, this pandemic is igniting fear, anxiety, and depression.

According to the Modesto Bee, mental health experts warn that the stress and anxiety of the pandemic will take a [toll on mental health](#) for people of all ages, but seniors and children face high risk. And calling or texting isn't always enough. Vintrica Grant, a mental health clinician for the Stanislaus County [Aging and Veterans Services states](#), "There are some who are definitely starting to feel that they're going into that downward spiral of depression because of lack of physical interaction with individuals." According to Stanislaus County, financial hardship can further exacerbate depression in seniors amid the pandemic.

When these vulnerable populations no longer have their support networks, counselors, friends, and family, access to behavioral, mental, and substance abuse treatment are so critically important and providing support – including through online models or via telephone counseling – are desperately needed. To protect the physical and mental health of my constituents, I urge SAMHSA to prioritize communities with great mental health needs such as mine and to implement the resources from the CARES Act, so that proper technologies, trainings, and treatments are available for my constituents to stay healthy.

From my conversations with constituents and health providers, I know that they will be looking for swift action and support for mental health services during this crisis. I look forward to your response and how SAMHSA plans to utilize its new additional funding to bolster the mental and behavioral health of the American people during the coronavirus pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the name.

Josh Harder

United States Representative (CA-10)