



**PROTECTING AMERICANS'
COVERAGE TOGETHER**

March 15, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman
The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jason Smith
Chairman
The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Chair
The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairs Sanders, Wyden, Smith, and McMorris Rodgers, and Ranking Members Cassidy, Crapo, Neal, and Pallone:

Protecting Americans' Coverage Together (PACT), a coalition of employer voices dedicated to strengthening the employer-sponsored insurance (ESI) system, has released [policy recommendations](#) to improve and modernize mental health care in the United States.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing mental health care shortfalls, and since then, demand for these critical services has skyrocketed. Today, there are not enough mental health professionals to meet the rising demand from patients, cost and site-of-care barriers are restricting many Americans from accessing the support they need, and physical and mental health care are too often separated when they are in fact fundamentally interconnected.

While employers have made significant progress responding to the mental health challenges faced by their workforce, Congress and the Administration should take meaningful steps to break down obstacles that are critical to enhancing mental health services across the nation.

Through expanding access to telehealth, strengthening the provider workforce, and better integrating care, we believe barriers to quality care will be reduced, patient outcomes will be better, and costs will be lowered. We look forward to working with you and others in Congress and the Administration to bring about these enhancements.

PACT's solutions are organized around the following pillars:

Expand Access with Telehealth

Throughout the pandemic, temporary telehealth flexibilities gave patients greater access to behavioral health providers. Enhanced access to telehealth gave Americans the ability to obtain treatment from providers beyond their immediate geographic area, which mitigated barriers in communities hamstrung by workforce shortages. These flexibilities should be made permanent.

Strengthen the Provider Workforce

Coupled with the growing demand for mental and behavioral health services is a shortage of quality providers in far too many communities, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Training additional providers, including non-clinical behavioral health providers and primary care providers, along with supporting additional community services to fill in gaps in care, could strengthen the workforce and help providers meet the growing demand for mental and behavioral health care.

Better Integrate Mental and Physical Health Care

Integrating mental and physical health care can also meet patient needs and reduce the strain on the provider workforce. Mental, behavioral, and physical health conditions are often interrelated and complex. Integrating care can improve outcomes, reduce unnecessary costs, strengthen overall health outcomes, and mitigate any remaining stigma around mental health conditions.

These policy recommendations respond to the types of challenges employers have [consistently reported](#) as necessary to take care of their employees and their families. To read more about PACT's specific recommendations under each of these main pillars, we have enclosed a copy of our full proposal.

If you have any further questions, please contact Christine Scullion, Executive Director of Government Affairs and Anna Vredenburg, Director of Health Policy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, at CScullion@USChamber.com and Avredenburg@uschamber.com.

Sincerely,

The U.S Chamber of Commerce, Vermeer Corporation, The National Association of Manufacturers, Business Roundtable, and Council for Affordable Health Coverage



cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Members of the Senate Committee on Finance
Members of the House Committee on Ways and Means
Members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce