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January 5, 2017

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
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U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Schumer, and  
Minority Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty association representing over 36,500 psychiatric physicians nationwide, we urge you to support continued and expanded access to quality evidence-based mental health care services.

Mental illness is very prevalent in the United States. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, over 68 million Americans experienced a psychiatric or substance use disorder in the past year. That is over 20 percent of the nation's population.

Individuals with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, substance use disorders, and other mental health issues previously struggled to obtain insurance coverage to help them access care. Current law changed that by requiring coverage of necessary services to treat mental illness. Consequently, it has become less burdensome for Americans to access appropriate and evidence-based mental health care, thus improving their chance for healthier and more productive lives while reducing the stigma around mental illness.

As Congress considers significant reforms to health insurance coverage this year, it is critical that any such reforms do not undo the gains which have been made over the past several years for individuals with mental illness, and that any such reforms only further enhance coverage and access to lifesaving evidence-based care.

The APA stands ready as a resource for you, and we look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead.

Sincerely,

Maria A. Oquendo, M.D., Ph.D.  
President

Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A.  
CEO and Medical Director