



January 17, 2020

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kim Schrier
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Underwood:

On behalf of the more than 590,000 physicians and medical students represented by the combined memberships of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the American College of Physicians, the American Osteopathic Association, and the American Psychiatric Association, we write to express our support for the *Primary and Behavioral Health Care Access Act* (HR 5575).

As organizations that represent the frontline physicians who provide the overwhelming majority of care to our nation's children, women, adults and elderly for a full-range of physical, mental and behavioral health conditions, we recognize the need for reforms to address ongoing barriers to care. When faced with high deductibles and out-of-pocket costs, many Americans are skipping or delaying care¹²³⁴⁵. When patients skip visits to their primary care or behavioral health provider, it can lead to conditions going undetected or unmanaged, worsening illness, and costlier future encounters with the health care system.

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<https://www.norc.org/PDFs/WHI%20Healthcare%20Costs%20Coverage%20and%20Policy/WHI%20Healthcare%20Costs%20Coverage%20and%20Policy%20Issue%20Brief.pdf>

2 <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/chart/2017/adults-high-deductibles-reported-problems-getting-needed-care-because-cost>

3 <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/2018-report-economic-well-being-us-households-201905.pdf>

4 https://www.cohenveteransnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CVN_Infographic_10.8.18_1045am.pdf

5 <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/The-Doctor-is-Out/DoctorIsOut.pdf>

By ensuring that individuals have access to three primary care visits and three behavioral health visits, independent of cost-sharing requirements, your legislation helps to eliminate economic barriers to care and strengthen the physician-patient relationship. Your legislation also recognizes that mental health is an essential part of overall health and well-being. Our [joint principles](#) call for addressing cost barriers and ensuring parity between medical and mental health benefits.

Increased access to primary care and behavioral health care has also been shown to reduce overall health care costs⁶⁷.

Thank you for your leadership. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation and to improve access to meaningful health coverage.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Physicians
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Osteopathic Association
American Psychiatric Association

⁶ https://www.pcpcc.org/sites/default/files/resources/pcmh_evidence_es_2019.pdf

⁷ <https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2019/05/aha-trendwatch-behavioral-health-2019.pdf>

About the American Academy of Family Physicians

Founded in 1947, the AAFP represents 134,600 physicians and medical students nationwide. It is the only medical society devoted solely to primary care. Family physicians conduct approximately one in five office visits -- that's 192 million visits annually or 48 percent more than the next most visited medical specialty. Today, family physicians provide more care for America's underserved and rural populations than any other medical specialty. Family medicine's cornerstone is an ongoing, personal patient-physician relationship focused on integrated care. To learn more about the specialty of family medicine, the AAFP's positions on issues and clinical care, and for downloadable multi-media highlighting family medicine, visit www.aafp.org/media. For information about health care, health conditions and wellness, please visit the AAFP's award-winning consumer website, www.familydoctor.org.

About the American Academy of Pediatrics

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit www.aap.org and follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds.

About the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) is the nation's leading group of physicians providing health care for women. As a private, voluntary, nonprofit membership organization of 60,000 members, ACOG strongly advocates for quality health care for women, maintains the highest standards of clinical practice and continuing education of its members, promotes patient education, and increases awareness among its members and the public of the changing issues facing women's health care. www.acog.org

About the American College of Physicians

The [American College of Physicians](http://www.acponline.org) is the largest medical specialty organization in the United States with members in more than 145 countries worldwide. ACP membership includes 159,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Follow ACP on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/acpinternists) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/acpinternists) @acpinternists and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/acpinternists).

About the American Osteopathic Association

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) represents more than 151,000 osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students; promotes public health; encourages scientific research; serves as the primary certifying body for DOs; and is the accrediting agency for osteopathic medical schools. To learn more about DOs and the osteopathic philosophy of medicine, visit www.DoctorsThatDO.org.

About the American Psychiatric Association

The American Psychiatric Association, founded in 1844, is the oldest medical association in the country. The APA is also the largest psychiatric association in the world with more than 38,500 physician members specializing in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses. APA's vision is to ensure access to quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. For more information please visit www.psychiatry.org.