

November 29, 2022

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairwoman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt  
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on  
Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee  
on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chairwoman, U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Ranking Member, U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Defense  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Blunt, Ranking Member Shelby,  
Chairwoman DeLauro, Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Cole, and Ranking Member Calvert:

On behalf of the 75 following national, state, and local organizations and providers in the mental health and substance use disorder fields, we thank you for the inclusion of these life-saving eating disorders-related requests in the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies (LHHS) Subcommittee and Defense Subcommittee reports and explanatory statements. We respectfully request your continued support for the inclusion of these requests in the end of year FY23 omnibus.

Eating disorders are often overlooked as a serious mental health condition that affects approximately 30 million Americans, and eating disorder prevention, screening, and treatment continues to go under-resourced.<sup>1</sup> Every 52 minutes an individual loses their life as a direct result of an eating disorder, resulting in over 10,000 deaths annually.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the need for increased mental health services and supports. Eating disorder diagnoses have increased 25% and eating disorder

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Access Economics. The Social and Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in the United States of America: A Report for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Academy for Eating Disorders. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/report-economic-costs-of-eating-disorders/>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

admissions have doubled for adolescent girls ages 12 to 18 since the onset of the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> For both youth and active-duty populations, we have seen increased needs for eating disorders treatment. The following requests have the potential to make profound impacts on the lives of those with eating disorders.

### ***Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies***

#### Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)

We respectfully request that you continue to provide strong funding for the Primary Care Training and Enhancement programs at HRSA, including a \$1,000,000 set aside to train primary care health professionals to screen, briefly intervene, and refer patients to treatment for eating disorders. This request was included in both the House and Senate's FY23 LHHS reports, and we request that it remains in any end of year package.

As we know, the Subcommittees are acutely aware of the behavioral healthcare workforce shortage and the lack of specialized training for complex mental illnesses. Physicians and other health professionals are not adequately trained on how to identify and treat eating disorders. In a study of the 637 U.S. medical residency programs, only 6% required any training in eating disorders to graduate.<sup>4</sup> This gap leaves pediatric and adult providers without the knowledge necessary to identify and treat these deadly conditions.

#### U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

We urge that the Subcommittees *direct* the CDC to reintegrate questions on unhealthy weight control practices within the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey. The House and Senate's FY23 LHHS reports included language that "encouraged" the CDC to do so, however we urge Congress to *direct* this requirement to ensure this data is collected since the CDC has ignored this Congressional request for the past three Fiscal Years.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to be a critical agency in monitoring eating disorder prevalence in youth and adults through their multiple surveillance surveys. However, in 2015 unhealthy weight control practices surveillance questions were removed from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System despite the CDC collecting this data since 1991. Examining trends of unhealthy dieting behaviors in youth is of critical importance given a teen with anorexia nervosa suffers ten times the mortality rate as a same-age peer.<sup>5</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the mental health of adolescents, with emergency room admissions for eating disorders doubling in girls ages 12-17.<sup>6</sup> The lack of data collection since 2015 has hampered public health surveillance and interventions of this serious mental illness.

#### National Institutes of Health (NIH)

We respectfully urge the Subcommittees to include the following language in the FY23 Omnibus encouraging increased eating disorders research funding and requesting an update from NIH on research

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<sup>3</sup> Dave Little, MD, Adrianna Teriakidis, PhD, Eric Lindgren, JD, Steven Allen, MD, Eric Barkley, Lily Rubin-Miller, MPH, April 2021, <https://epicresearch.org/articles/increase-in-adolescent-hospitalizations-related-to-eating-disorders>

<sup>4</sup> Mahr F, Farahmand P, Bixler EO, Domen RE, Moser EM, Nadeem T, Levine RL, Halmi KA. A national survey of eating disorder training. *Int J Eat Disord*. 2015 May;48(4):443-5. doi: 10.1002/eat.22335.

<sup>5</sup> Fichter MM, Quadflieg N. Mortality in eating disorders – Results of a large prospective clinical longitudinal study. *International Journal of Eating Disorders* 2016; 49:391-401.

<sup>6</sup> Radhakrishnan, Lakshmi, Leeb, Rebecca, Bitsko, Rebecca . . . & Anderson, Kayla. (February, 18, 2022). Pediatric Emergency Department Visits Associated with Mental Health Conditions Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, January 2019-January 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 71. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/wr/pdfs/mm7108e2-H.pdf>

and resources needed to address gaps in genetics, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of eating disorders, as was included in the House and Senate's LHHS reports.

*The Committee commends NIH for supporting multi-Institute research on the chronic, fatal, and serious mental illnesses encompassing eating disorders that impact nearly 30,000,000 Americans during their lifetimes, and their association with other conditions such as co-morbid mental illnesses, substance use disorder, and metabolic, cardiovascular, neurological, and reproductive disturbances. The Committee encourages NIH to increase resources for eating disorders research and directs NIMH, NIMHD, NICHD, and NIDA to provide the Committee with an update within 180 days of enactment of this Act on research gaps in the genetics, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of eating disorders.*

Despite the severity of the medical complications associated with eating disorders, the NIH has historically underfunded eating disorders research. The NIH only spends ~0.11% of its budget on eating disorders research and the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) spends ~1.27% of its budget on eating disorders research, for a disease that affects 9% of the U.S. population and has the highest average cost out of any mental health condition.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Subcommittee on Defense***

#### Department of Defense (DoD)

We respectfully urge the Subcommittees to include the House's language within the FY23 Omnibus requesting a report by Defense Health Affairs on provider education and screening, standards of care and screenings, and barriers to implementing a provider training on eating disorders. Additionally, we request that eating disorders continue to be listed as a topic under the Defense Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program, as has been the case since Fiscal Year 2017.

Servicemembers – particularly active-duty servicewomen – and military families are affected by eating disorders at elevated rates. Diagnoses among military personnel have risen 26% from 2013-2016, and 21% of children of servicemembers and 26% of spouses of servicemembers are currently symptomatic for an eating disorder. Since the beginning of the pandemic, military health professionals in the Army, Marine Corps, and other branches have reached out directly to the eating disorders community for training and education on these conditions. They've warned that cases have been rising on bases across the nation. As with the civilian population, however, military health care providers rarely receive training in accordance with medical standards of care on how to identify, screen, and treat eating disorders.

We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Academy for Eating Disorders

Alaska Eating Disorders Alliance

Accanto Health | The Emily Program and  
Veritas Collaborative

Amanda Birkhead Nutrition Counseling LLC

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<sup>7</sup> Deloitte Access Economics. The Social and Economic Cost of Eating Disorders in the United States of America: A Report for the Strategic Training Initiative for the Prevention of Eating Disorders and the Academy for Eating Disorders. June 2020. Available at: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/striped/report-economic-costs-of-eating-disorders/>.

American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare

American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work

American Association on Health and Disability

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Bay Area Nutrition, LLC

BE REAL

Carolina Resource Center for Eating Disorders

CBT Center of WNC

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Clinical Social Work Association

Deborah L Klinger, M.A., LMFT, PC

Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota

Dr. Beverly Smith

E.L.M. Wellness

East Cooper Behavioral Health

Eating Disorder Coalition of Iowa

Eating Disorder Hope

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

Eating Disorders Resource Center

Eating Recovery Center and Pathlight Behavioral Health

Equip Health

Exceptional Families of the Military

F.E.A.S.T.

Hanger Hall School

International Federation of Eating Disorder Dietitians

Lakeshore Foundation

Living Balance Psychotherapy

Lutz, Alexander & Associates Nutrition Therapy

Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance

McCallum Place

MCEC - Military Child Education Coalition

Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN)

Multi-Service Eating Disorders Association

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

National Alliance for Eating Disorders

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders

National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

National Association of Social Workers

National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders

National Council for Mental Wellbeing

National League for Nursing

National Military Family Association

Wrobel & Smith PLLP

National Register of Health Service  
Psychologists

NEDA

Nutritious Thoughts

Opal: Food+Body Wisdom

Project HEAL

Prosperity Eating Disorders and Wellness

REDC Consortium

Sanford Comprehensive Treatment for Eating  
Disorders

Sheppard Pratt

SMART Recovery

STRIPED (Strategic Training Initiative for the  
Prevention of Eating Disorders)

SunCloud Health

The Eating Disorders Foundation

The Kennedy Forum

The New England Eating Disorders Program at  
Sweetser

The Renfrew Center for Eating Disorders

The Trevor Project

Timberline Knolls

Traci Malone Nutrition

Tricare for Kids Coalition

University of Wyoming

Washington University School of Medicine

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