

FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER

For the Week of October 28 to November 1, 2019

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Lauding the Inclusion of APA Priorities in Higher Education Bill

This week, the House passed its version of the Higher Education Act reauthorization, College Affordability Act (H.R. 4674), which contains several of APA's top [priorities](#). This included: the restoration of subsidized federal student loans for graduate students; the reauthorization of the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need Program; and an expansion of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. The bill also follows APA recommendations by calling for better preparing educators through psychological research-informed teaching practices, supporting accessibility of higher education for students with disabilities and addressing campus mental health. APA staff will also continue to press for legislative language APA provided on campus sexual assault—including a definition of “trauma-informed investigation”—being part of the legislation as it moves toward a floor vote.

For more information, contact Kenneth Polishchuk at kpolishchuk@apa.org.

Educating Congress on the Harms of Family Separation

APA expertise was showcased in an Oct. 30 congressional briefing hosted by Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.). The forum was aimed at informing members of Congress and their staff about the continuing mental health crisis immigrants face as a result of recent immigration policies. The briefing emphasized the need to ensure that mental health screenings are administered when an individual is first detained at a facility and to require professional training for personnel to detect warning signs of mental illness. APA was represented on the panel by Dr. Shahana Koslofsky of the School of Graduate Psychology at Pacific University, who works with immigrants in the Portland, Oregon, area. She presented material on culturally and linguistically appropriate services for the Latinx immigrant community.

For more information, contact Serena Davila, JD, at sdavila@apa.org.

Working to Improve Care for Older Americans

APA applauded the House of Representatives for passing the Dignity in Aging Act (H.R. 4334), which enhances programs under the Older Americans Act. APA has been working closely with House and Senate offices to advocate for provisions on preventing suicide, ending social isolation and addressing cultural sensitivities with caregiving that were included in the bill. A similar bill will now need to move through the legislative process in the Senate.

For more information, contact Serena Davila, JD, at sdavila@apa.org.

Welcoming Applications for APA's 2020–21 Policy Fellowships

Each year, APA's Policy Fellowship Program gives three psychologists the opportunity to bring valuable and much-needed psychological perspectives to federal policymaking institutions. Two fellows are positioned to work in congressional offices and another works in a federal agency in Washington, D.C. To apply, go to www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2019/11/public-policy-fellowships. Applications are **due by Jan. 5**.

For more information about the APA Congressional Fellowships, contact Amalia Corby at acorby-edwards@apa.org or for the APA Executive Branch Science Fellowship, contact Craig Fisher at cfisher@apa.org.

Working with APA Scientists to Increase Funding for PTSD Research

With the joint DoD-VA funding for this multi-year grant concluding in 2020, APA advocacy staff and member psychologists are working together to urge the agencies, and Congress if necessary, to fund another competitive round of PTSD research. APA's Director of Military and Veterans Health Policy Heather O'Beirne Kelly, PhD, headed to Texas for the fourth annual Combat PTSD Conference, hosted by the STRONG STAR research consortium, to engage the principal investigators in advocacy for continued Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funding. STRONG STAR and its affiliated Consortium to Alleviate PTSD include over 150 research collaborators and 40 institutions worldwide. Results from their clinical trials and large-scale studies are changing the way these agencies provide mental health care to military service members and veterans.

For more information, contact Heather O'Beirne Kelly, PhD, at hkelly@apa.org.

Condemning a Proposal That Would Reduce Children's Access to Healthy Food

APA urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reconsider proposed changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that would reduce food security for low-income children. After the [initial comment](#) period for the rule closed, the Food and Nutrition Service released additional analysis to address how the proposed changes to SNAP eligibility would impact children served by the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. APA submitted [additional comments](#) in response to the new analysis, expressing strong opposition to the proposal, which would cause an estimated 982,000 children to lose direct access to free or reduced-priced school meals.

For more information, contact Cynthia Whitney, MPA, at cmalley@apa.org.

Working to Increase Access to Telehealth Under Medicare

APA endorsed the CONNECT for Health Act of 2019 (S. 2741), telehealth [legislation](#) introduced by bipartisan members of the Senate Telehealth Working Group—Senators Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.). The legislation seeks to advance the use of telehealth in Medicare, while reducing costs and increasing access. The bill removes the geographic restrictions for mental health services and recognizes the patient's home as an eligible originating site for receiving telehealth services.

For more information, contact Laurel Stine, JD, at lstine@apa.org.

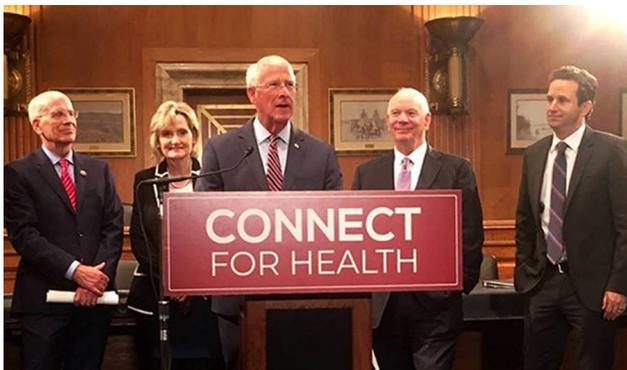


PHOTO: Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) and Sens. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.) and Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii).