



FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER

For the Week of June 10, 2019

This week, psychologists were making their voices heard from across the country and on Capitol Hill. In two congressional briefings, APA members discussed how psychological science can improve policies to prevent gun violence in schools and address disparities in school discipline. Read more about our ongoing advocacy efforts on immigration, substance use disorders, childhood trauma, suicide prevention and mental health parity.

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Thank You to Our Grassroots Advocates!

More than 400 members of APA’s grassroots network emailed their congressional representatives urging them to vote yes on the package of spending bills being debated on the floor of the House this week. With final votes likely next week, it’s not too late for you to [contact](#) your representatives and ask them to vote yes on critical Fiscal Year 2020 support for research, education, justice and mental health programs. *For more information, please contact Pat Kobor at pkobor@apa.org.*

Spotlighting Immigration from a Children's Mental Health Perspective

On June 13, former APA President Antonio E. Puente, PhD, represented APA at an event led by First Focus, a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, as a part of their annual Children's Week campaign. Dr. Puente gave remarks on how detention, family separation, deportation anxiety and other related adverse childhood experiences undermine children's development, mental health and long-term well-being. Reporters from national press organizations attended the event to learn more about how immigration policies are affecting children and families.

APA staff continue to distribute the psychology working group report to members of Congress to raise awareness of mental health and immigration. The report can be found at www.calameo.com/books/004070067ac6ac71fe151.

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

Addressing Weapons and Violence in Schools with Data

APA, Div. 15 (Educational Psychology) and other organizations presented the latest data available on the damaging impact of gun violence on schools and communities at a June 12 congressional briefing. Spearheaded by APA member Ron Avi Astor, PhD, the briefing also presented data-driven recommendations to inform policies that seek to mitigate violence in schools and communities. Among the speakers presenting at the briefing were APA member Dorothy Espelage, PhD, as well as Lauren Hogg, a survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida. Learn more about the issue by listening to Dr. Astor's [podcast episode](#) and reading Div. 15's [policy brief](#) on this topic.

For more information, please contact Ben Vonachen, MA, at bvonachen@apa.org.

Applying Psychological Research to Address Disparities in School Discipline

In a second congressional briefing this week, APA increased awareness of the disparities in rates of pre-K to 12 school suspensions and expulsions by race, ethnicity and disability. Amanda Sullivan, PhD, and Ivory Tolson, PhD, explained the psychological consequences of higher expulsion rates among marginalized student groups. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), chair of the House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services, expressed her commitment to using congressional oversight of the Department of Education to ensure discipline policies do not discriminate against racial and ethnic-minority students, students with disabilities or other vulnerable student populations.

For more information, contact Leo Rennie at LRennie@apa.org.

Supporting Humanitarian Standards for Immigration Legislation

APA voiced support for Rep. Raul Ruiz's (D-CA) Humanitarian Standards for Individuals in Customs and Border Protection Custody Act (HR 3239). The bill seeks to provide every detainee in U.S. Customs and Border Protection custody with an initial health screening and addresses psychological and mental health care. The legislation was endorsed by 28 other organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Center for American Progress and the American Psychiatric Association. APA will be working more closely with the congressman's office to improve the bill from a psychological perspective.

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

Raising the Profile of Psychological Science

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), an increasingly important [funding source](#) for psychological research, is now up for reauthorization. Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) introduced [H.R. 3030](#), the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Extension Act of 2019 to reauthorize

PCORI for the next decade. APA [sent a letter](#) endorsing the bill, noting that as of April, PCORI had awarded \$517 million for 126 comparative clinical effectiveness research studies related to mental health. The letter also points out that psychological scientists are serving as principal investigators on 72 projects, in traditional domains of mental health such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, serious mental illness and traumatic brain injury, as well as in such integrated-care areas as low back pain, sleep apnea, treatment strategies for sickle cell anemia and medical decision-making.

For more information, please contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at gmumford@apa.org.

Rallying for Suicide Prevention Research and Services

Suicide is a national public health crisis and one of the leading causes of death that has been steadily on the rise. To raise awareness of this issue and the role psychologists play in addressing the crisis, APA co-sponsored the Second Annual Rally to Prevent Suicide at the U.S. Capitol Reflecting Pool. The rally featured remarks from members of Congress, mental health advocates, as well as people who have been affected by suicide. APA called on Congress to fund suicide research in parity with funding for cancer or Alzheimer's as well as to improve access to quality community mental health care services and supports.

For more information, please contact Ben Vonachen, MA, at bvonachen@apa.org.

Supporting Trauma-Informed Care for Children

APA expressed its support for the Resilience Investment Support and Expansion (RISE) from Trauma Act, which aims to increase support for children who have been exposed to trauma and a variety of adverse childhood experiences. Championed by a bipartisan group of senators and representatives led by Sens. Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV), along with U.S. Reps. Danny Davis (D-IL) and Mike Gallagher (R-WI), the legislation responds to a recent [GAO report](#) that discusses the detrimental effects of trauma on children and the shortage of trained personnel to help them. APA [proudly endorsed](#) this bill for its comprehensive, public health approach to addressing childhood trauma. If enacted, the legislation would advance many APA policy priorities such as expanding federal training programs to recruit more mental health clinicians and creating a new HHS program to enforce health insurance parity for children's mental health care.

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

Nominating Psychologists to a Key Federal Substance Use Disorders Committee

In an effort to improve coordination across federal agencies on activities related to substance use disorder, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of National Drug Control Policy are seeking nominations for a newly established [Interdepartmental Substance Use Disorders Coordinating Committee](#), which will have both federal and nonfederal members. APA has nominated 11 highly esteemed psychologists with expertise in the area, representing licensed mental health professionals with experience treating individuals with substance use disorders; treatment professionals who provide services at opioid treatment programs; and treatment professionals with research or clinical experience working with racial and ethnic-minority populations, medically underserved populations and homeless populations.

For more information, please contact Shannon Wood at swood@apa.org.

Hailing House Bill to Strengthen Parity

APA voiced its support for the Mental Health Parity Compliance Act, introduced by Reps. Katie Porter (D-CA), Donald Norcross (D-NJ) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL). This bill aims to strengthen mental health parity enforcement by requiring health insurers to audit their health plans and to provide analysis to both the secretaries of Health and Human Services and Labor if parity complaints are filed. The legislation also

calls for annual compliance investigations of 50 random plans and insurers, with reports being submitted to Congress. The bill mirrors its Senate counterpart, the [Mental Health Parity Compliance Act](#), which APA endorsed last month. Read a press release from the office of Rep. Porter citing support from APA Chief Advocacy Officer Katherine B. McGuire [here](#).

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

Taking Concerns About Veterans' Care to the Media

For several years, APA has weighed in with concerns about the new purchased care option at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), implemented this week under the MISSION Act. APA is particularly concerned that the program's outside care providers do not have adequate training for treating veterans. We have discussed this issue with members of Congress, the White House and the VA itself. To further communicate our concerns, we brought our message to national media, including [NPR Marketplace](#), Cox Media television outlets, and Stars and Stripes newspaper. By incorporating media into our advocacy strategy on this issue, we hope to push Congress into addressing our concerns with outside providers by holding both the VA and outside third-party administrators to higher standards for network adequacy, professional provider standards and training.

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