



FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER
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Advocating for Humane Treatment of Immigrants

APA joined several other organizations in a [letter](#) of support for the [Humanitarian Standards](#) immigration bill (H.R. 3239), which was introduced by Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.) and passed the House on July 24. APA staff and expert psychologists worked closely with Rep. Ruiz's staff on the legislation to ensure it mandates initial health screening, including mental health, and health care for individuals in custody of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Sen. Tom Udall (D-N.M.) has introduced companion legislation in the Senate (S. 2135). APA will continue to advocate for this and other [immigration](#) priorities.

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

Opposing Threats to Human Rights Protections for Sexual and Gender Minorities

In another [letter](#), APA joined the human rights community this week in expressing concern with the Department of State's creation of a Commission on Unalienable Rights. APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr., PhD, also wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, arguing that the commission's stated purpose—to decide which rights are “unalienable” and which are “ad hoc”—may weaken universal and equally valued human rights. That concern has been magnified by the statements of commission members who have opposed the rights of sexual and gender minorities and the right to reproductive health care. APA's [letter](#) also notes that sexual and gender minorities remain vulnerable around the globe to both direct violence and discrimination, both of which are harmful stressors that contribute to well-documented physical and mental health disparities.

For more information, contact Gabe Twose, PhD, at gtwose@apa.org.

Building Congressional Support for the Minority Fellowship Program

On July 25, 20 psychologists and students from 13 states visited 44 Capitol Hill offices to request a \$2 million funding increase for the Minority Fellowship Program, which supports training for minority mental health professionals to provide culturally competent, accessible mental health and substance use services to diverse populations. Although President Trump's 2020 budget eliminated funding for the program, the House passed legislation to increase it by \$2 million above the FY 2019 funding level of \$13.2 million. The Senate has not yet addressed this measure.

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

Fighting Sexual Harassment in STEM and Academia

APA's grassroots advocates are urging Congress to pass the Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2019 (H.R. 36), which supports research on sexual harassment in STEM fields and calls for creating a federal working group to help reduce such harassment. The legislation comes in the wake of a 2018 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [report](#) that documented widespread sexual harassment in the academic workplace. Members of Congress are working to address the issues raised in this report, recognizing that without action, women and individuals from vulnerable groups will abandon the field of science.

For more information, contact Amalia Corby at acorby-edwards@apa.org.

Testifying about the Increase in Teen Vaping

Renowned tobacco control scientist and APA Fellow Raymond Niaura, PhD, [testified](#) at a July 25 hearing of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, Economic and Consumer Policy Subcommittee. The hearing was called after national survey data indicated a rapid rise in teen vaping, particularly JUUL, a popular type of e-cigarette. Dr. Niaura noted that while JUUL use has increased among teens, most of the rise was seen in youth who were already using other tobacco products. Dr. Niaura also reinforced the need for adult smokers to retain access to e-cigarettes as an optional cessation strategy for those trying to quit using combustible tobacco products. The full hearing webcast is archived on the [subcommittee's website](#).

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

Informing the Ad Council Campaign on Safe Firearm Storage

APA is working with other leading gun violence and suicide prevention experts on the #EndFamilyFire media campaign, which encourages safe storage of firearms in households. The campaign was developed by the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and its advertising partners, the Ad Council and McKinney. The first phase of the campaign has been directed at decreasing unintentional child shootings; the next phase will focus on the role safe storage plays in preventing suicides, which comprise almost two-thirds of gun deaths.

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

Providing Insights on Health Insurance for Military Personnel and Families

APA collaborated with Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii) and Sen. Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) on their request for a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on the effect of changes made in 2018 to TRICARE, the health insurance program for military personnel and their families. As the GAO now prepares the report, APA provided information to GAO staff on the drastic cuts to psychologists' reimbursements through TRICARE and recommended changes to ensure military members and families have better access to timely, high-quality, evidence-based care.

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

Supporting the Science of Opioid Addiction

On July 23, the U.S. House [passed](#) the bipartisan Expanding Findings for Federal Opioid Research and Treatment Act (H.R. 3153), which directs the National Science Foundation to support merit-reviewed and competitively awarded research on the science of opioid addiction. The bill was introduced by Rep. Jennifer Wexton (D-Va.). APA's endorsement of the act is one of many APA [efforts](#) to address the opioid crisis, which include expanding federal support for research.

For more information, contact Craig Fisher, PsyD, at cfisher@apa.org.

Celebrating a Budget Deal that Would End the Threat of Sequestration

The House approved the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019](#) (H.R. 3877), a two-year budget deal that will allow significant spending increases for Fiscal Year 2020 and raise the national debt limit. The Senate will take up the bill next week. The deal is significant because it ends the threat of sequestration—spending cuts that would go into effect automatically if Congress fails to cut enough spending on its own. APA and many other science, education and health organizations have long advocated for Congress to raise the spending caps and eliminate sequestration. The budget legislation is also significant because it demonstrates that compromise between the two parties and the administration is possible despite the current climate of rancor. See the [APA Science Policy Blog](#) for more information on the bill's provisions.

For more information, contact Pat Kobor at pkobor@apa.org.