

February 25, 2021

Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of five of the nation's leading mental health, addiction, and well-being advocacy groups, we write to express our strong support for the nomination of Vivek Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. as the 21st Surgeon General of the United States.

Americans are entering into a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic that has compounded the mental health epidemic. More than [26 million individuals](#) are experiencing mental illness without treatment. While the year-end funding package and stimulus contained support for mental health and substance use-related programs, there has been a severe lack of funding and prioritization of mental health services across all levels of government. People in every community across the country are suffering.

We need strong leaders like Dr. Murthy in office immediately to meet the needs of this moment and help bring relief to millions of Americans. As Surgeon General in the Obama Administration, Dr. Murthy went on a listening tour of America to hear firsthand about people's health concerns, learning that loneliness is deeply associated with an increased risk of heart disease, dementia, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances and even premature death. He also focused heavily on combating the opioid epidemic and prioritized emotional well being as a key component underlying all public health issues.

Dr. Murthy, a strong mental health champion, is uniquely qualified to address both the physical and mental health needs Americans are facing today. As a key member of President Biden's COVID-19 task force, he is well-versed in the effects the pandemic has had on Americans' well-being and his leadership will be critical to reversing the effects of the mental health crisis.

We believe Dr. Murthy is committed to addressing the gaps in programs and policies that promote and advance mental health, reduce stigma, and expand access to critical mental health and addiction care. We look forward to working with Dr. Murthy to improve the urgent state of

mental health in America and bringing mental health to the forefront of all public health solutions.

Sincerely,

Paul Gionfriddo,
Mental Health America

Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy,
The Kennedy Forum

Angela Kimball,
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Ben Miller,
Well Being Trust

Bill Smith,
Inseparable