



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Michelle Steel
U.S. House of Representatives
1127 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Daniel Kildee
U.S. House of Representatives
200 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Steel and Representative Kildee:

AARP, which advocates for the more than 100 million Americans age 50 and over, is pleased to endorse H.R. 5819, the *Connecting Our Medical Providers with Links to Expand Tailored and Effective (COMPLETE) Care Act*. We applaud your bipartisan efforts to encourage primary care providers to adopt behavioral health integration (BHI) models to better coordinate both physical and mental health care for older adults.

With rising rates of mental health concerns and substance abuse disorders, it is vital that patients with behavioral health needs are connected to care as soon as possible. BHI models, like the Community Care Model and Primary Care Behavioral Health Model, blend both physical and behavioral health care in one setting to better address medical conditions and related behavioral health factors that affect overall health and well-being. By providing patients with coordinated care in familiar settings, BHI models have been shown to improve access to mental health care, reduce wait times for treatment, and improve patient outcomes.

Your legislation would assist Medicare primary care practitioners in covering the startup costs of implementing evidence-based integration models through temporary enhanced payment rates for BHI. The bill would also require reporting to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to determine the extent to which clinicians are integrating BHI services in primary care settings.

Thank you again for your efforts to improve the mental health and well-being of all older adults. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Emily Hetherington on our Government Affairs team at ehetherington@aarp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Bill Sweeney".

Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs