



December 11, 2023

The Honorable Barbara Lee
U.S. House of Representatives
2470 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
U.S. House of Representatives
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lee and Representative Fitzpatrick:

AARP, which advocates for the more than 100 million Americans age 50 and over, is pleased to endorse H.R. 1638, the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2023*. We applaud your bipartisan work to increase older adults' access to behavioral health services by allowing clinical social workers (CSWs) to provide a wider range of services to people on Medicare.

Older adults residing in nursing homes often suffer from disproportionately higher rates of mental health illnesses and cognitive disorders including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, dementia, and more. Care providers in these settings are often unable or untrained to provide behavioral and mental health care to patients. CSWs have the education and expertise to fill that gap by diagnosing and treating mental health disorders, providing psychosocial care, and performing Health and Behavior Assessment and Intervention (HBAI) services.

Among other changes, your bill would allow CSWs to provide their full range of services in nursing facilities by allowing them to bill under Medicare Part B while a resident is receiving skilled nursing care. This will provide better coordination of care and increase the pool of providers who are able to provide behavioral health assessments and treatment to Medicare beneficiaries in residential and skilled nursing facilities. Your bill would also allow CSWs to provide HBAI services under Medicare Part B for people with emotional and psychosocial concerns that arise because of a medical condition unrelated to an underlying mental health condition.

AARP appreciates your work 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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Sweeney" clearly distinguishable.

Bill Sweeney
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs