NEWS RELEASE

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Over 80 Mental Health and Human Services Organizations Call on Congress to Engage Whole Communities in Trauma Prevention and Healing by Introducing the "Resilience for All Act of 2021"

The International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)* today released a letter to Congress calling for the introduction and enactment of the "Resilience for All Act of 2021." The letter is endorsed by over 80 national, state, and local mental health and human services organizations from across the nation, and by over 240 individual professionals. The letter can be found on page three of this document.

Overview: The "Resilience for All Act of 2021" will, for the first time, make the prevention and healing of mental health and psychosocial problems through community-based, age and culturally-appropriate, population-level initiatives a national priority. It will also establish an Office of Mental Wellness and Resilience in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and a grant program run by the new CDC office to fund community-based mental wellness and resilience building initiatives nationwide.

"The Covid-19 pandemic exposed the limitations of the crisis and illness, single-person, clinical treatment approach to addressing mental health and psychosocial problems," said Bob Doppelt, Coordinator of the International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC). "The significant number and diversity of national, state, and local organizations and individuals that endorsed the letter calling on Congress to introduce and enact the "Resilience for All Act of 2021" shows that professionals nationwide see the need and want the federal government to support the engagement of entire communities in preventing and healing psychological and emotional distresses and traumas."

"The organizations with which I work, including the Climate Psychiatry Alliance, the American Association for Community Psychiatry, and the American Psychiatric Association, are all in alignment with regard to federal funding to support resilience implementation at the community level," said David A. Pollack, MD, Professor Emeritus for Public Policy, Oregon Health and Science University. "We see such work as the essential public health equivalent of providing mass vaccination to prevent or mitigate serious infectious disease outbreaks, only in this case we are talking about ways to prevent the negative mental health outcomes of acute and longer term climate change events."

"In Tarpon Springs we found that the best way to address and prevent violence, childhood trauma, and other huge societal challenges is to engage community members to develop solutions." said Robin Saenger, Founding Director of Peace4Tarpon in Tarpon Springs Florida. "Community initiatives such as
ours are needed nationwide. The Federal government can play a key role to support these efforts by enacting the "Resilience for All Act of 2021."

"Nurses are extremely traumatized and stressed today due to the Pandemic and the disasters happening across the nation," said Cara Cook, Director of Programs with Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments. "Individual self-care is important, but it takes a community to prevent and heal these problems and that is why we want Congress to move forward with the "Resilience for All Act of 2021."

"Ample data confirms the benefits of building community-wide resilience based on an understanding of the impact of adverse experiences and subsequent health outcomes," said Theresa Barilla, Founder and Board President Emeritus of the Community Resilience Initiative in Walla Walla, WA. "Physical, mental, and emotional gains along with school and work performance improve when communities focus on protective factors and resilience strategies. The sense of urgency with continued perturbations to community function clearly endorse passage of the “Resilience for All Act of 2021” now for the framework for action needed."

"My organization works in the U.S. and internationally responding to human made and natural disasters," said Elaine Miller-Karas, Co-Founder and Director of Innovation at the Trauma Resource Institute. "We have seen a systemic lack of preparedness throughout the United States to respond to the mental health challenges people face during and after disasters. Underserved populations and those living in poverty especially suffer. This policy is urgently needed to support coordinated community-based initiatives and should be embraced as a national priority."

"While there is increasing focus on building more resilient physical infrastructure, we’ve not paid nearly enough attention to the psychological consequences of the rising natural disasters and other adversities we face," said Dr. David Shern, Senior Associate, Department of Mental Health Bloomberg School of Public Health, Vice Chair Campaign for Trauma Informed Policy and Practice, and former President/CEO of Mental Health America. "It is critical that these population health issues be addressed systematically and quickly. Fortunately, we have tools to address this challenge, but need policies to implement them. The "Resilience for All Act" is one of the essential policies."

"Individualized clinical treatment will remain important," concluded Doppelt. "However, it assists people only after they show symptoms of pathology and does not engage whole communities in proactively building the skills, strengths, resources, hope, and other protective factors that are vital to help everyone prevent and heal mental health and psychosocial problems. To address this glaring omission Congress urgently needs to introduce, enact, and fund the "Resilience for All Act of 2021."

* The International Transformational Resilience Coalition is a network of over 400 mental health, education, disaster management, faith, and climate professions working to build awareness of and methods to prevent and heal the mental health and psychosocial problems generated by the climate emergency and other adversities. Website: http://www.theresourceinnovationgroup.org/intl-tr-coalition
Letter Calling on Congress to Introduce and Enact the "Resilience for All Act of 2021"

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Speaker United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

October 21, 2021

Re: Request to Introduce and Enact the "Resilience for All Act of 2021"

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy:

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals, request that you introduce and enact the "Resilience for All Act of 2021" this Congress. This urgently needed policy will, for the first time ever, make preventing and healing mental health and psychosocial problems among the entire population through community-based initiatives a national priority. It will achieve that goal by expanding our existing approach to mental health by authorizing, supporting, and funding community-based, equitable and just, culturally-tailored initiatives that enhance the capacity for psychological and emotional wellness and resilience of all adults and children nationwide.

The "Resilience for All Act of 2021" is urgently needed because the skyrocketing mental health and psychosocial impacts generated by the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the glaring limitations of our nation's current approach to mental health. One of the deficiencies is that clinical treatment and direct service programs are crisis and illness focused and assist individuals only after they show symptoms of pathology. While important, they do not enhance the skills, strengths, social connections, and other protective factors needed to prevent and heal mental health and psychosocial problems. In addition, many people can't pay for clinical therapy, or won't because they see it as only for the mentally impaired or weak, as a luxury for the rich, conflicting with religious or spiritual beliefs, have cultural mistrust, or fear being stigmatized if they become involved. Further, many injustices and biases are embedded in the system that adversely affect African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans and other BIPOCs.

Unless Congress enacts the "Resilience for All Act of 2021" the climate emergency will make pandemic-generated mental health and psychosocial problems seem trivial. As the August 9, 2021 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change made clear, temperatures will continue to rise and expose every American to unprecedented disruptions to the ecological, social and economic systems they rely on for food, water, jobs, income, shelter, health, safety, and other basic needs. In addition, every year 20-30 percent of the population will be impacted by more frequent, extreme, or prolonged heat waves, wildfires, storms, floods, storm surges, sea level rise, or other record disasters.

Left unaddressed, the mental health and psychosocial problems generated by climate impacts will mushroom to levels far beyond anything the U.S. has ever experienced. The harmful reactions will profoundly affect the
health, safety, and daily functioning of every adult and child. They will also greatly increase physical illnesses and diseases. And, they will significantly raise costs for families, businesses, and all levels of government.

These impacts are bad enough. Just as troubling is that, left unaddressed, the fear-based self-protective survival reactions of millions of Americans generated by climate impacts will hinder efforts to slash greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the climate crisis--and many other problems--to manageable levels.

All the individualized clinical treatment programs in the world will never stem the rising tide of perilous mental health and psychosocial problems unless an equal or greater emphasis is placed on enhancing the capacity for psychological and emotional wellness and resilience among the entire population. A public health and prevention science approach is needed to accomplish this, which is what the "Resilience for All Act of 2021" will authorize and fund.

A public health approach addresses mental health and psychosocial problems by strengthening protective factors that counter the forces that undermine health, safety, and wellness. It takes a population-level approach, not one that merely focused on treating high risk individuals, with a special focus on those that are typically unrepresented. And it prioritizes preventing problems, not treating them only after they appear. I

Prevention science expands the public health approach by showing that mental health and psychosocial problems can be prevented and that wellness and resilience can be enhanced. A growing consensus in the field finds that the most effective and efficient way to accomplish this is through community-based initiatives.

Numerous community-based trauma prevention, wellness, and resilience programs exist in the U.S. They engage a broad and diverse group of local residents and organizations in planning, implementing, and continually improving a range of age and culturally-tailored actions that strengthen existing and establish additional protective factors that build and sustain the capacity for wellness and resilience among all adults, adolescents, and children. Mental health and human service professionals typically support the local efforts, not lead them, while also assisting people who still cannot function or are at risk of harming themselves or others.

Clinical treatment and direct human service programs will remain very important. However, when never-before-seen-before adversities such as those produced by the climate emergency threaten everyone, community-based, equitable and just, culturally-tailored, population-level initiatives are a smarter, more efficient, and cost-effective way to prevent and heal mental health and psychosocial problems than relying solely on individualized clinical treatment and direct service programs.

For these reasons we urge you to swiftly expand our nation's approach to preventing and healing mental health and psychosocial problems by introducing and enacting the "Resilience for All Act of 2021."

Thank you for considering this request.

[Click here to read the "Resilience for All Act of 2021"]

Signed by the Organizations Listed Below
International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)
American Association for Community Psychiatry
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH)
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
National Prevention Science Coalition
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD)
National Association of Social Workers
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Rural Health Network of South Central NY
Black Psychiatrists of America
Campaign for Trauma-Informed Policy & Practice (CTIPP)
Resilience Builders
Vibrant Emotional Health
Prevention Institute
Physicians for Social Responsibility
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare
Well Being Trust
Children's Mental Health Network
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
American Association of Suicidology
PACEs Connection (formerly ACEs Connection)
Crisis Residential Association
Steinberg Institute
International OCD Foundation
Massachusetts Association for Mental Health
Insight Medical Group LLC
Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN)
Neighborhood Resilience Project, Pittsburg PA
Climate Psychiatry Alliance
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Trauma Informed Education Coalition (TIEC)
Texas Physicians for Social Responsibility
ACBC Services
Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action
Community Resilience Initiative
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Prevent Child Abuse NY
Lieberman Group, Inc.
American Society of Adaptation Professionals
Deep Streams Institute
Trauma Informed Oregon
Peace4Tarpon
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
Factor 10 Inc.
One Earth Sangha
Mother and Babies Perinatal Network of South Central New York, Inc.
Center for Nonviolence & Peace Studies
Greater Richmond SCAN (Stop Child Abuse Now)
One Shared Spirit Inc.
Organic Intelligence
Values to Action
Nurse Flourish
Prevention Opportunities, LLC
LifeStance Health
BehaviorLytics
Synergy Services
Able-Differently
Sonoma County ACES Connection
Aloka Vihara Forest Monastery
Potts Family Foundation
Integral Growth, LLC
Physicians for Social Responsibility, AZ Chapter
Essie B. & William Earl Glenn Foundation for Better Living
Trauma Resource Institute, Inc.
Dovetail Learning
Insight Meditation Community of Berkeley
Finger Lakes Community Schools
Jewish Climate Action Network, MA
Natural Dharma Fellowship
A Mindful Emergence, LLC
Crossnore Communities for Children
350 Eugene
NorCal Resilience Network
Participatory Research Consulting LLC
Action Collaborative for the Transforming Spirit Now
New Republic of the Heart
Insight Dialogue Community
Press On, LLC
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Click here for a list of the more than 240 individual mental health and human services professionals who signed the letter to Congress calling for the introduction and enactment of the RFA.