

ADOPTING THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES’ COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORT

The escalating mental health crisis in America is among the most pressing challenges individuals, families, communities, and local governments face today. Nearly one in four U.S. adults aged 18 or older experience mental illness each year, with 26 percent of those experiencing a serious mental illness. In addition, approximately one in five adolescents aged 12-17 experience a major depressive event each year. These alarming statistics have yielded a mental health crisis that has challenged counties across America to provide high-quality health and human services.

In response to this crisis, and in partnership with Los Angeles County (County), the National Association of Counties (NACo) formed the Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing (Commission) in February 2023. The Commission, co-chaired by Supervisor Kathryn Barger and King County, Washington Executive Dow Constantine, was comprised of officials representing both urban and rural counties from across the country. Commission members led advocacy with lawmakers on Capitol Hill and the White House seeking accountability, and flexibility, as well as incentives and reforms that promote better outcomes, optimize resources and foster collaboration to address the national mental health crisis.

Since its inception, the Commission focused on four fundamental policy priorities:

- 1. Amending Exclusionary Policies Under Medicaid
- 2. Enhancing Local Crisis Response Systems
- 3. Strengthening the Mental Health Workforce
- 4. Enforcing Mental Parity

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MOTION

SOLIS	_____
MITCHELL	_____
HAHN	_____
BARGER	_____
HORVATH	_____

These policy priorities served as guiding principles for the Commission's focus and are fundamental to addressing the mental health crisis in Los Angeles County. The considerable progress of the Commission includes securing its priorities in federal policymaking and solidifying alliances with partnering organizations, such as the National Alliance on Mental Health, to call on Congress to take decisive legislative action. This year, for example, the combined efforts of the County, the Commission, and its alliances led to the Federal Communications Commission initiating a rule making process to address needed reforms in the 9-8-8 Crisis Response System relating to geo-routing. Separately, legislation was introduced to address bed limits in place because of the Institutions for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion. The County was also integral to rolling out California's new Medicaid justice-involved waiver.

In July 2024, the Commission released its final [report](#) entitled, "From Crisis to Solutions: Policy Catalysts for Improved Outcomes". Culminating the Commission's work, the report highlights the four policy priorities while delineating federal policy recommendations designed to address the acute mental health crisis in America and offering practical solutions. The Commission calls on federal policymakers to make reforms, such as removing federal limitations on Medicaid benefits for incarcerated individuals and people who require treatment in an IMD, coordinating resources for developing crisis call centers, creating pathways for behavioral health professions and workforce recruitment, and incentivizing and enforcing existing mental health parity laws across all insurers and providers.

To broaden Los Angeles County's federal behavioral health advocacy, it is essential to join national efforts that represent the diverse needs facing the national mental health system. The policy recommendations from the Commission align closely with the County's current federal legislative agenda, which the Board of Supervisors has consistently advocated for. The Commission also created and distributed advocacy materials on these four priorities, resources that will be key to advancing these policy initiatives.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations Branch to:

1. Adopt the four policy pillars in NACo's Commission on Mental Health and Wellbeing's final report as part of Los Angeles County's federal legislative priorities,
2. Distribute the Commission's final report to members of Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation and relevant federal Administration leaders, including the Department of Health and Human Services; and,
3. Reinforce Los Angeles County's advocacy efforts at the State and Federal level to elevate the growing mental health needs of our residents.

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