



The Community Mental Wellness & Resilience Act

Cosponsors: Representatives Paul Tonko (D-NY) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

117th Congress

"Americans are increasingly experiencing mental health challenges further exacerbated by natural disasters. Congress can take action to empower our communities and promote mental wellness and resilience."

❖ Paul Tonko

Mental health problems are at epidemic levels

- According to Mental Health America, last year almost 20 percent of adults, or **nearly 50 million Americans, experienced a diagnosed mental illness** and 5 percent had a severe mental illness
- 2022 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey found that 37 percent of students at U.S. high schools reported poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression
- A poll by the American Psychiatric Association last year found that 53 percent of adults with children under 18 said they are **concerned about the mental state of their children**
- Community traumas are increasing. This happens when an overwhelmingly stressful event or series of events, such as wildfires, hurricanes or floods, traumatize entire neighborhoods, towns, or cities

Billion \$\$\$ disasters make matters worse

- In 2021 more than 40 percent of Americans lived in a County impacted by a major natural disaster
- **Disasters can traumatize more than 40 percent of those who are directly impacted**, 10 to 20 percent of disaster response workers, as well as those not directly affected but know someone who is or view the events from afar
- Consequently, the number of people who experience a mental health problem as a result of a natural disaster often outweigh those with physical injuries by 40 to 1

Congress must act to promote mental wellness!

The Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act will:

- ❖ Establish a competitive grant program at the CDC to create, operate, or expand community-based programs that use a public health approach to build mental wellness and resilience
- ❖ These programs will work to enhance the capacity of all residents for mental wellness and resilience to prevent and heal mental health problems generated by disasters and toxic stresses
- ❖ Community initiatives will develop their own age and culturally appropriate strategies to enhance and sustain population-level mental wellness and resilience, with specific attention to high-risk individuals

We must act now to expand our approach to preventing and healing mental health problems!