

PUBLIC POLICY BRIEFS

SISTERS *of* CHARITY HEALTH SYSTEM



Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act

Issue Overview

Mental health is a large topic in our society today, mainly because of the large population experiencing mental illness or issues surrounding mental health. Because we know this population is so high, we want to expand mental health services to better accommodate the growing number of people suffering. While most racial/ethnic minority groups have similar mental disorders, both in number and type, to White Americans, the care that these minority groups receive is not proportionate. The national percentage of people with any mental illness receiving services is much greater in the White population than in any minority population. There are perceived barriers to this care with things like insurance policy or lack thereof, lack of trust, lack of diversity among providers, language barriers, and the stigma of mental illness which is oftentimes greater in minority populations.

These racial/ethnic minority groups deserve equal and proper care for issues pertaining to mental health. This bill allows for reform in our current system that lessens the gap between mental health care provided for these minority groups and White Americans.

The House of Representatives has set a bill in motion regarding equity in mental health services across ethnicities/races. The details of that bill are outlined below.

House of Representatives Bill H.R. 1475

Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act

This bill aims to address racial and ethnic minority mental health disparity research gaps. It also aims to increase the knowledge and effectiveness of health professionals at addressing these gaps by establishing educational programs and core competencies. Finally, this bill will allow for the development and implementation of an outreach and education strategy that promotes behavioral and mental health while reducing the stigma associated with each, especially among racial/ethnic minorities.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This bill calls for a study to be conducted surrounding the gaps in research about mental health in ethnic/racial minorities • This bill will increase the ability of health professionals to treat mental health in these minorities through the implementation of training and programs • The bill has bipartisan support • This bill is endorsed by both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association, along with several other large mental health associations and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While it will offer more knowledge about the disproportionate mental health care, this bill does not guarantee that this is free or easily accessible to minorities • More details are needed to truly understand the impact of this legislation

Current Status

This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 12, 2021. The bill is waiting further approval and implementation in the Senate.

What does this mean for us at The Sisters of Charity Health System?

We are devoted to healing all of God’s people, regardless of race or ethnicity. This requires access to quality care for all. Access to mental health is vital to serving individuals and families.

What does this mean for you, your family, or your community?

The health of our community is reliant on the health of individuals and families. Health outcomes are significantly worse for racial and ethnic minorities. We believe that in order to increase our community’s overall health, we must begin by ensuring access to appropriate care for all.

