



The Community Mental Wellness & Resilience Act

**Cosponsors: Representatives Paul Tonko (D-NY), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Kathy Castor (D-FL)
117th Congress**

Americans are increasingly experiencing mental health challenges as a direct result of climate change. 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

Climate Change is making matters worse

- In 2021 more than 40 percent of Americans lived in a County impacted by a major natural disaster
- In a warming world, disasters can happen in places, at times and with intensities never seen before
- Studies have found that **3/4 of youth nationwide have experienced anxiety** and/or feel overwhelmed by the climate crisis
- **Disasters can traumatize over 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