

July 27, 2021

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Underwood:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, our clinician partners – including more than 270,000 affiliated physicians, 2 million nurses and other caregivers – and the 43,000 health care leaders who belong to our professional membership groups, the American Hospital Association (AHA) is pleased to support your legislation, the Child Suicide Prevention and Lethal Means Safety Act.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over the past decade, suicide rates in the United States have increased dramatically, and now suicide ranks as the tenth leading cause of death for all Americans, and the second leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 10 and 34.

AHA member hospitals and health systems provide myriad behavioral health services, including emergency care for survivors of suicide and prevention for those who may be at risk. We recognize the importance of identifying and mitigating suicide risk factors, such as ready access to lethal means, for the patients we serve. However, millions of Americans live in areas with severe shortages of mental health professionals, and these shortages are especially acute in rural and low-income urban communities.

Your timely legislation would support hospitals' efforts by funding training programs to help health care workers identify those at high risk for suicide or self-harm. The bill would also promote expertise among the emerging health care workforce by providing grants to facilitate suicide prevention training at health professions schools.

The AHA appreciates your leadership on this critical issue and looks forward to working with you to secure enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

/s/

Stacey Hughes
Executive Vice President

