

May 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chair
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

On behalf of the undersigned associations representing health plans, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon as the next Assistant Secretary for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Recent events have thrust the importance of behavioral health to the forefront. Last year, the Census Bureau reported that one-third of Americans were showing signs of clinical anxiety or depression due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that substance use disorders (SUDs) and suicide attempts are also on the rise.¹ Given these alarming statistics, we need an experienced and passionate public health leader at the helm of SAMHSA to steer efforts to reduce the impact of substance use and mental health disorders in our communities.

Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon is precisely that leader for several key reasons. Firstly, she is already familiar with SAMHSA, having served as a Senior Advisor to the SAMHSA Administrator ensuring that she can quickly begin tackling the behavioral health crises in our country. Secondly, during her over 20 years in the mental health and addiction field, she has gained perspective of the relevant issues from a local, state, and national level which will allow her to have a nuanced approach when addressing issues such as workforce shortages, maternal mental health issues, and bridging gaps in behavioral health services in Medicaid. Additionally, as the Commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as well as a practicing clinical psychologist, she understands the importance of the need for providers to have comprehensive information about a patient in order to treat them properly, thus making her the optimal Assistant Secretary to oversee the promulgation of the next 42 CFR Part 2 Rule to allow for better flow of health information for patients with SUDs. Lastly, her experience in research and policy will help move SAMHSA and the industry forward. Data is at the crux of our decision

¹ Alyssa Flowers, *A third of Americans now show signs of clinical anxiety or depression, Census Bureau finds amid coronavirus pandemic*. WASH. POST, May 26, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/05/26/americans-with-depression-anxiety-pandemic/>, last visited May 19, 2021.

making and having an Assistant Secretary who recognizes this important point will ensure that policymaking is based on evidence.

Dr. Delphin-Rittmon's career achievements prove she is an empathetic, thoughtful, and practical leader in behavioral health and her strategies for leading SAMHSA will benefit patients, providers, and payers. We look forward to working with her to ensure all Americans have access to services for their behavioral health needs. As such, we urge the Senate to swiftly confirm Dr. Delphin-Rittmon for this crucial role.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Community Health Plans

America's Health Insurance Plans

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Association for Community Affiliated Plans

Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

Medicaid Health Plans of America

CC: Kelsey Mellette, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legislation, Department of Health and Human Services

Bill Smith, Inseparable