

## *The Joint Insurance Committee*

National Association of Social Workers – NC Chapter  
North Carolina Psychiatric Association

North Carolina Psychological Association  
North Carolina Society for Clinical Social Work

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Roy Cooper  
Governor  
20301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

The Honorable Mandy Cohen, MD  
Secretary, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services  
2001 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2001

Dear Governor Cooper and Secretary Cohen,

The Joint Insurance Committee (JIC), a group composed of the professional associations of psychiatry, psychology, and social work, is concerned about the arrival in North Carolina of the COVID-19 virus and its impact on consumers and providers of mental health services.

Based upon news reports from around the world and upon the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), we anticipate that:

- This disease will continue to spread throughout the United States.
- There will be no vaccine available for many months or longer.
- There will be major disruption of normal functions - including economic, financial, social, self-care, and health care activities.
- There will be both direct and indirect impacts of the virus with direct ones coming from infected persons becoming incapacitated due to severity of symptoms and indirect impacts stemming from measures designed to prevent disease transmission such as quarantines
- Many of the impacts will have a mental health component as affected persons deal with the stresses of the disease itself and reactions to losses due to disability and even deaths.
- There will likely be significant strains on our health system, especially including mental health resources and providers.

**We write today to encourage you to proactively facilitate policies that will utilize the use of telehealth-enabled treatment by all payors during this time of concern.** As anxiety over the virus escalates, experience has shown that mental health symptoms are exacerbated. As travel advisories are issued and communities are advised to stay home, we feel strongly that the public health approach should include mental and physical healthcare provisions for telehealth—both for patients and providers.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Robin Huffman  
Executive Director  
North Carolina Psychiatric Association

Valerie Arendt  
Executive Director  
National Association of Social Workers North Carolina

Martha Turner-Quest  
Executive Director  
North Carolina Psychological Association

Chenita Rountree  
President  
North Carolina Society for Clinical Social Work

CC: Elizabeth Cuervo Tilson, MD, State Health Director  
Dave Richard, Deputy Secretary DHHS  
Kody Kinsley, Deputy Secretary DHHS