



Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance

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Find Wellness.

Find Hope.™

## For Immediate Release

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## Leading mental health organizations applaud reintroduction of PEERS in Medicare Act in Congress

*Bipartisan legislation would expand access to lifesaving peer support services for people with substance use and mental health conditions*

**Joint statement by Mental Health America (MHA), the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD), the Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW), Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), Faces & Voices of Recovery (FAVOR), the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH), the National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC), the National Council for Mental Wellbeing (NCMW), One World Recovery Network (OWRN), and the Alliance for Rights and Recovery.**

As our nation continues to respond to the ongoing overdose and mental health crises, we strongly support the reintroduction of the Promoting Effective and Empowering Recovery Services (PEERS) in Medicare Act in Congress and urge swift passage of this important bill. This bipartisan legislation would expand access to lifesaving peer support for people with substance use and mental health conditions, by allowing Medicare to cover these services at rural health clinics, federally qualified health centers, and community mental health centers.

We applaud Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA), and Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE) for championing this bill, which will make it easier for people with substance use and mental health conditions to access the support that they need close to home.

Peer support specialists are people with experience of substance use and/or mental health conditions, who are trained to provide support to others who are experiencing similar conditions. Peer support services include a range of effective activities that promote recovery and well-being, and have been shown to:

- Lower the overall cost of mental health services
- Decrease hospitalization rates and the days spent in inpatient services
- Increase and improve engagement with treatment, care, and other services
- Decrease substance use, depression, and symptoms of mental health conditions
- Build social connection
- Improve whole health, including management of co-occurring chronic conditions like diabetes
- Improve quality of life

Increasing access to peer support services is especially promising for communities with limited or no access to substance use and mental health care providers, such as in rural regions and tribal communities in the United States. Peer support offers a low-cost, high-impact way to fill these critical gaps in the behavioral health care system, meeting people where they are and supporting effective, person-centered care in communities across the country.

This revised bill expands on a provision led by Sens. Cortez Masto and Cassidy and Reps. Chu and Smith that was included in the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#), which allows Medicare to include peer support specialists as part of interdisciplinary integrated care teams, (such as in primary care settings).

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"Peer support is at the heart of DBSA's mission - it's how our organization began and remains central to our work today. This legislation recognizes what our community has known for decades: people with lived experience are powerful agents of hope and wellness. Expanding Medicare coverage of peer support services will bring this proven approach to more people who need it, especially in communities that have been underserved." --Suzanne Baber, DBSA Interim CEO

**Additional Information:**

- [Senate bill sponsors' press statement](#) and [bill \(S.3521\)](#)
- [House of Representatives sponsors' press statement](#) and [bill \(H.R.6841\)](#)