

April 12, 2021

Honorable Ron Wyden, Chair
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mike Crapo, Ranking Member
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo:

On behalf of the nation's leading mental health, addiction, and well-being advocacy groups, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Andrea Palm as the next Deputy Secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Americans have lived through more than a year of a pandemic that has magnified many of our nation's most neglected issues, notably our widespread mental health crisis. More than 26 million individuals are experiencing mental illness without access to treatment, and every year thousands of Americans are overdosing and dying from the opioid epidemic. We need passionate and experienced public health officials in HHS right now to start tackling the many health crises the U.S. is facing.

Ms. Palm is a public health leader with over 20 years of experience managing large teams, billion dollar budgets, and driving public health initiatives. She has a well-rounded perspective and immediately relevant public health policy expertise, having previously served as the Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), and in key leadership roles at HHS. In her most recent role as Wisconsin's top health official, she oversaw a budget of \$12 billion and was responsible for managing the state's COVID-19 response, Medicaid program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), behavioral health programs, and more. Her experience in managing public health crises, the successful negotiation of bipartisan bills in Congress, and exceptional knowledge of regulatory, budget, and legislative processes will make her an invaluable asset in navigating the challenges facing HHS today.

As Deputy Secretary of HHS, Ms. Palm will address many of the same crises that she was managing in Wisconsin, including the opioid epidemic, a mental health crisis, and the COVID-19 pandemic. In her previous service at HHS, she spearheaded efforts to create a crisis response initiative to tackle the opioid crisis and produced an actionable plan to increase access

to the overdose reversal drug Naloxone, medication-assisted addiction treatment, and improved prescriber practices for chronic pain sufferers.

As Wisconsin's top health official, she prioritized expanding mental health support as part of Wisconsin's Medicaid expansion, and shepherded efforts to secure passage of bipartisan telehealth legislation to dramatically expand access to services, including behavioral health, for Medicaid members. She understands that integrating mental health services into the overall health care system can reduce stigma and increase help-seeking behavior and access to much-needed treatment.

As a devoted public servant who recognizes the key role government plays in public health, Andrea Palm will be devoted to serving the health needs of all Americans. We look forward to working with her to integrate mental health services and to expand treatment to the millions of Americans suffering through mental health and addiction crises. We strongly encourage her swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

Chase Bannister,
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

Lisa Dailey,
Treatment Advocacy Center

Paul Earley, MD, DFASAM,
American Society of Addiction Medicine

Dr. Arthur C. Evans, Jr, Ph.D,
American Psychological Association

Daniel H. Gillison, Jr.,
NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness

Paul Gionfriddo,
Mental Health America

Pamela Harrington,
Bring Change to Mind

Chuck Ingoglia,

National Council for Behavioral Health

The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy,
The Kennedy Forum

Saul Levin, MD, MPA, FRCP-E, FRCPsych,
American Psychiatric Association

John MacPhee,
The Jed Foundation

Ben Miller,
Well Being Trust

Amit Paley,
The Trevor Project

Bill Smith,
Inseparable

Brandon Staglin, M.S.,
One Mind

Mayor Darrell Steinberg,
Steinberg Institute

Dr. Ashwin Vasan,
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Columbia University