**Op-ed Template**

*The ideal op-ed length is 600 – 700 words, not including the title and one sentence biographical description at the end. The title (4-6 words) should be original and based on the themes you choose to highlight. We strongly encourage you to edit and adapt as much of the “template” language as possible so that each op-ed is unique. Op-ed page editors take a very negative view of “cookie-cutter” op-eds.*

Opening 3-4 paragraphs - to be customized by each author; goal is to create urgency by highlighting the current problem in order to create demand for a solution. Possible themes:

* COVID-19 has created a perfect storm threatening the survival of [insert state’s] mental health and addiction treatment providers.
* Combination of lost revenue, increased staff overtime costs, and expenses for acquiring PPE and implementing telehealth (cite recent National Council national [online survey](https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/press-releases/behavioral-health-crisis-in-america-getting-worse-as-covid-19-forces-community-behavioral-health-care-organizations-to-cut-back/) results and state specific data shared by the Council)
* Insert data about numbers of people in your state that were living with mental illness and substance use disorders (SUDs) before the pandemic. These are diseases that isolate individuals from their families, communities and social supports. COVID-19 exacerbates an already unhealthy situation. And as tens/hundreds of thousands of people file for unemployment in the state, levels of anxiety are increasing in every corner of the state.

A secondary crisis is on the horizon.

We are but a couple months away from the potential collapse of the behavioral health safety net system in our state. Behavioral health providers are an essential partner in the communitywide effort to treat people with mental illness and SUDs in a community setting, and keeping them out of overtaxed Emergency Departments and jails. But we cannot do our part if we are struggling for our own survival.

We also know that many of the people working on the front lines right will experience profound trauma and symptoms of PTSD. We want to be there for them when they need us most, but without immediate action from Congress, we may be unable to help.

With rapid and decisive congressional action, this crisis can be prevented.

The “solution” / the “ask”

[Insert your organization] has joined the National Council four Behavioral Health and more than 40 other national organizations addressing mental illness and addiction to [request](https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/press-releases/38-5-billion-request-to-congress-for-emergency-funding-to-avert-collapse-of-behavioral-health-organizations-nationwide/) a $38.5 billion infusion of emergency funds for community behavioral health organizations (CBHOs) to avert a large-scale public health calamity, with a significant portion of these funds dedicated to CBHOs enrolled in Medicaid and serving some of the nation’s most vulnerable individuals. This funding would immediately stabilize the system and ensure the continued availability of mental health and addiction treatment services to millions of individuals nationwide.

* If appropriate, make reference to past bipartisan leadership among your congressional delegation either in support of behavioral health funding or recent stimulus funding.

Conclusion

The ## employees of my organization are dedicated to this community. Every day, whether in person or via telehealth options, they commit to making lives better. Together, we are doing our part - and we are ready to do even more in the future. But we cannot do it alone.

We urge every member of the [state] congressional delegation to make sure that organizations providing mental health and addiction treatment services have enough money to keep the doors open in the midst of this crisis. But they can also ensure that the heroes working on the front lines today are cared for tomorrow, when they need us most. I urge Congress to include $38.5 billion of emergency funds in the next stimulus - our collective future depends on it.