



February 15, 2019

Representative Brian Babin  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2236 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senate  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Val Demings  
U.S. House of Representatives  
217 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Thom Tillis  
U.S. Senate  
185 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Kyrsten Sinema  
U.S. Senate  
825B&C Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Babin and Demings and Senators Rubio, Sinema, and Tillis:

The American Psychoanalytic Association (APsAA), the oldest and largest psychoanalytic association in North America, strongly supports H.R.838/S.265, “the Threat Assessment Prevention and Safety (TAPS) Act of 2019.” Thank you for working in a bipartisan and bicameral nature to create a national effort to prevent acts of targeted violence.

Like all Americans, we are deeply troubled that frequent and indiscriminate violence continues to threaten individuals and groups within our communities. Our endorsement reflects APsAA’s longstanding call to reduce violence through engagement of national experts and community leaders, enabled to apply their expertise to develop guidelines to share information about potential threats without threatening patient privacy or individual rights.

We applaud you for your wisdom in creating a national task force to recommend national guidelines for behavior-based threat assessment and management and to support communities. Your approach calls on a multidisciplinary, public-private partnership of experts to analyze, assess, and support threat assessment management tools and techniques, many of which are already working in our communities.

As mental health professionals, we were especially pleased that the legislation explicitly mandates that up to two members of the task force be mental health professionals with clinical experience. Further, we are pleased that the national strategy must be advised by mental

health service professionals who will “collaborate, advise, and consult in a behavioral threat assessment process.”

Most importantly, we greatly appreciate the fact that the legislation does not stigmatize those with mental illness or suggest that people with mental illness are those most likely to perpetuate societal violence. Instead, the legislation seeks to identify “individuals who are exhibiting patterns of concerning behavior that indicate an interest, motive, intention, or capability of carrying out an act of violence.” This standard is very much like the state laws and professional ethics by which we are already bound as mental health professionals, to share information about our patients only when absolutely necessary to protect the community from imminent harm. These provisions indicate your clear intention to respect and engage mental health professionals, where appropriate, to proactively seek to prevent threats of imminent violence.

We appreciate your thoughtful and deliberative approach to these critically important issues and stand ready to work with you to advance the legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lee Jaffe".

Lee Jaffe, Ph.D.  
President, The American Psychoanalytic Association