



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 15, 2022

Contact: Hilary Portay or Sarah Warnke

Elizabeth Christian Public Relations

hportay@echristianpr.com or swarnke@echristianpr.com

203.561.6095 or 214.773.5594

Children's Hospital Association of Texas members provide expert insight to U.S. Senate Finance Committee on the pandemic's devastating effect on kids' mental health

Children's hospitals in Texas ask Congress to develop solutions and provide funding to expand mental health capacity

Austin, TX – Three of the Children's Hospital Association of Texas (CHAT) member hospitals, Children's Health (Dallas), Driscoll Children's Hospital (Corpus Christi), and Texas Children's Hospital (Houston), submitted expert statements to the U.S. Senate Finance Committee in connection with two committee hearings addressing the pandemic's impact on kids' mental health. The statements highlight the increasing numbers of children with mental health issues treated by children's hospitals in Texas since the pandemic began. These experts also recommend immediate steps that Congress can take to improve access to care for children.

The statements from Jeanne Nightingale, senior director for Psychiatry Services, Children's Health; Mary Dale Peterson, M.D., executive vice president and chief operating officer, Driscoll Children's Hospital; and Karen Price, chief of Psychology, Texas Children's Hospital, were submitted as part of the Senate Finance Committee's hearings on "Protecting Youth Mental Health" held on Feb. 8 and 15, 2022.

"Healthcare experts at CHAT's member hospitals are underscoring the challenges that our doctors, nurses and mental health specialists see in children's hospitals in Texas every day," Stacy Wilson, president, Children's Hospital Association of Texas, said. "It is important that Members of Congress hear from hospitals on the frontline so that they understand the high number of children with mental health issues that seek care in our hospitals. There was a mental health crisis before the pandemic, and the pandemic has only increased the demand for services that were already in very short supply. The mental health challenges that impact children won't disappear once the pandemic is over but will be felt for years to come."

The statements provide insight into the challenges that CHAT member hospitals have been facing since the start of the pandemic, including the drastic increase in the percentage of children in the emergency department with severe mental health issues, including suicide attempts, and the ongoing need for inpatient psychiatric hospitalization and outpatient psychiatric treatment programs.

The hospitals also urge Congress to create solutions that include investments in pediatric mental health infrastructure, increased access to community-based and intermediate levels of care, additional funding to support workforce initiatives for children's hospitals and mobile mental health clinics—and more.

Given the current crisis that children are facing, it is vital that Congress take immediate steps toward protecting and improving children's well-being and mental health. The statements submitted by CHAT member hospitals provide invaluable insight and tangible steps toward developing solutions that address the entire continuum of care for children's mental health from prevention and early detection through inpatient hospitalization.

###

About the Children's Hospital Association of Texas

The Children's Hospital Association of Texas (CHAT) is a nonprofit association with the mission to advance children's health and well-being by advocating for policies and funding that promote children's access to high-quality, comprehensive health care. Learn more about CHAT at chatexas.com or follow CHAT on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ChildHospAssnTX>.