**Sample Communication to U.S. Senators in Support of S. 286, the**

**Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2019**

**I am contacting you to urge your support of S. 286 which will provide for the coverage of mental health counselor services under part B of the Medicare program.**

**Mental health counselors (MHC’s) are licensed in all 50 states to provide independent mental health and addiction services and should not be unavailable to the elderly once they turn 65 years old. Many have to change providers at age 65 simply due to an outdated provider reimbursement issue.**

**Many MHCs practice in rural areas and other underserved areas and can expand access to many Medicare beneficiaries who don’t currently have a mental health professional available to them.**

**More than three-quarters of U.S. counties have severe shortages of psychiatrists and other types of professionals needed to treat mental health and substance use disorders, and many do not accept Medicare payment. The opioid epidemic has made the shortage of these types of health care professionals an even larger problem. Medicare recognition of mental health counselors can address this growing problem.**

**Many federal programs already recognize mental health counselors, including the National Health Service Corps, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and TRICARE.**

**We respectfully request your support for – and consider co-sponsoring – S. 286, so that your elderly constituents have better access to critically important and consistent mental health and addiction services.**

**Sincerely**

**Name**

**Contact Information**