



February 18, 2025

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.
U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Kennedy,

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of Health and Human Services. We are writing to you as the leading national medical organizations representing psychiatrists and child and adolescent psychiatrists in the country. While we acknowledge the goal of reducing chronic disease in America's youth in your *Making America Healthy Again* (MAHA) initiative, we would like an opportunity to discuss your concerns related to the use of psychiatric medications for the treatment of pediatric mental illness and substance use disorder.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) promote evidence-based science for the treatment of children and adolescents with mental health and substance use disorders. Research shows that for some diagnoses the most effective treatment for children suffering with a mental health disorder is a combination of psychotherapeutic intervention and medication. Psychiatric medications when prescribed and used as directed by highly trained physicians like psychiatrists are safe, effective, and in many cases, lifesaving.

We are in the middle of a mental health crisis, with a record number of Americans struggling with mental health and substance use disorders. We strongly urge you to prioritize strengthening the ability to respond to an increasing demand for psychiatric services, especially for children. Untreated mental illness and substance use among our youth are having a resounding impact in our communities resulting in poor educational attainment, unstable housing, higher unemployment, poverty, and trauma. Early intervention, prevention, and treatment will lead to cost savings for individuals, health insurers, and society.

We look forward to offering our organizations' expertise in partnership with you and the MAHA commission to combat the current crisis and improve the lives of children and adolescents living with mental illness and substance use disorders across the country.

Please feel free to contact Kristin Kroeger (kkroeger@psych.org) and Alexis Geier-Horan (ahoran@aacap.org). Thank you.

Sincerely,



Ramaswamy Viswanathan, M.D., Dr.Med.Sc.
President, APA



Tami Benton, M.D.
President, AACAP