

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Announces Support for Virtual Community Support Act

CHICAGO, July 28, 2020 – The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) announces its support for the Virtual Community Support Act introduced July 24, 2020 by Congressman Joe Kennedy III and Congressman Tony Cárdenas.

This legislation would provide funding for peer support services delivered by people with lived experience of mental health or substance use conditions through a new program at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Among the program's initiatives is development of the certified peer support specialist workforce and funding to establish virtual peer-led support group meetings.

“Throughout this pandemic, our nation’s lack of access to behavioral health care has had devastating consequences. But it has also elevated the potential of a modern approach to treatment through community based and peer support virtual services,” said Congressman Kennedy. “Under the Virtual Community Support Act, we can connect patients with care as we continue to confront this pandemic and after we overcome it.”

“As we adapt to this new world of virtual learning and working, we must also ensure that our health services are virtually accessible – including mental and emotional support services,” said Congressman Cárdenas. “We cannot ignore the real mental and emotional toll this pandemic has taken on Americans. This bill supports critical behavioral health and peer services so that patients get the care they need.”

Speaking in support of the legislation, DBSA CEO Michael Pollock stated, “As the pandemic continues, the need to transition from in-person peer support to virtual services increases because these groups can instill hope at a time when social determinants of health are deteriorating.”

DBSA hosts 17 national online support groups facilitated by peer support specialists that people can join from anywhere. In addition, DBSA local chapter volunteers facilitate hundreds of virtual support groups across the country. In a recent survey taken by national participants, 79% reported that they feel more hopeful at the conclusion of their online support group. Seventy-seven percent (77%) felt that they learned new strategies and information about living with a behavioral health condition.

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance provides hope, help, support, and education for people living with mood disorders. These conditions account for 50% of the nation’s suicides and cost U.S. employers an estimated \$23 billion annually in lost workdays and related expenses. DBSA serves 4 million people each year through our website and our nationwide network of 500+ support groups and 160+ chapters. More information can be found

at dbsalliance.org and our social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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