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Vibrant Emotional Health Provides Senate Testimony on Mental Health Care for Older Adults

Kimberly Williams, President & CEO, emphasized the need to provide comprehensive, integrated, recovery-oriented supports which are tailored to the unique needs of older individuals.

New York, NY (May 19, 2022) - Vibrant Emotional Health, a national mental health nonprofit, provided expert testimony to the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging at this morning's hearing entitled, "[Mental Health Care for Older Adults: Raising Awareness, Addressing Stigma, and Providing Support.](#)" Held by Committee Chairman Bob Casey (D-PA) and Ranking Member Tim Scott (R-SC), the hearing examined opportunities to improve mental health services for the nation's older adults, address gaps in services, and promote programs that support seniors with mental health or substance use disorders.

In her statement, Kimberly Williams, Vibrant's President & CEO, stated, "Older adults represent 54.1 million individuals, roughly one in every seven Americans. Twenty percent of adults age 55 and older have a diagnosable mental health and/or substance use disorder. Sadly, most older people with cognitive and/or behavioral health disorders do not get adequate care and treatment. In addition, lower income older adults, who are both covered by Medicare and Medicaid, are forced to navigate two complex insurance systems each of which have different coverage and payment rules."

At the hearing, the Senators highlighted new bipartisan legislation to advance state efforts to integrate Medicare and Medicaid benefits, including mental health care, for individuals that receive care through both programs. The bill is intended to promote an easier and more streamlined health care experience for low-income seniors and people with disabilities.

In her testimony, Williams noted a number of recommendations which could be implemented at the federal, state, and local government levels to help raise awareness, reduce stigma and provide support for older adult mental health care including:

- Integrating mental health, substance use, physical health and/or aging services, particularly for individuals who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid
- Improving access to mental health and substance misuse services, including disseminating best practices
- Addressing the shortage of a clinically and culturally competent workforce, in part by recruiting and training more providers and in large part by including older adults themselves through both paid and volunteer roles
- Restructuring how services are financed, particularly within Medicare and Medicaid, so they are affordable; enhance integrated care and treatment; expand the types of providers available; and support services in the home and community settings.

Williams closed out her testimony stating, “Vibrant stands ready to partner with Members of the Committee, older adults with lived experience and other stakeholders to implement these recommendations and improve mental health outcomes and quality of life for older Americans.”

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About Vibrant Emotional Health

Vibrant Emotional Health is a non-profit organization that helps individuals and families achieve emotional wellbeing. For over 50 years, our groundbreaking solutions have delivered high-quality services and support, when, where and how people need it. We offer confidential emotional support through our state-of-the-art contact center and crisis hotline services that use leading edge telephone, text and web-based technologies and include the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Disaster Distress Helpline, NFL Life Line and NYC Well. Through our community wellness programs individuals and families obtain supports and skills they need to thrive. Our advocacy and education initiatives promote mental wellbeing as a social responsibility. Each year we help more than 2.5 million people live healthier and more vibrant lives. We’re advancing access, dignity and respect for all and revolutionizing the system for good. Visit vibrant.org. And follow Vibrant on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).