



April 16, 2024

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rogers
House Energy & Commerce Committee Chair
United States House of Representatives
2188 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Health Subcommittee Chairman
United States House of Representatives
2434 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
House Energy & Commerce Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo
Health Subcommittee Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
272 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Rogers, Ranking Member Pallone, Chairman Guthrie, and Ranking Member Eshoo:

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for the Committee's consideration and passage of the *Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act (H.R.6284)*. Importantly, this legislation would establish a national working group to create recommendations for standardizing the measurements and definitions of social isolation and loneliness for public and private research and clinical use. We urge its swift passage.

As a diverse group of leading national organizations focused on addressing the public health crisis of social isolation and loneliness, we are keenly aware of the challenges Americans face across the nation amidst this crisis. Individuals across the lifespan, geographic regions, socioeconomic statuses, religions, and races are all affected by isolation and loneliness. Research shows that poor or insufficient social connection leads to a significantly increased risk of chronic illnesses, as well as a 60 percent increase in risk of premature death.¹ In younger populations, nearly 80 percent of young adults experience serious loneliness, and the rate of loneliness among young adults increased annually between 1976 and 2019.² This severe loneliness was independently associated with a broad range of mental and physical health, including depression, suicidal ideation, and substance use disorder.³

Social isolation and loneliness also have a significant negative impact on the economic health of the nation. Recent studies have indicated that social isolation and loneliness cost the U.S. economy as much as \$406 billion a year.⁴ These deleterious consequences have justified U.S. Surgeon General Murthy calling social isolation and loneliness an epidemic that harms individual and societal health.

While there is a rich and growing body of evidence describing the public health crisis, the academic community has confirmed that studies often employ various scales and tools for measurement. This great

¹ U.S. Surgeon General. "New Surgeon General Advisory Raises Alarm about the Devastating Impact of the Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation in the United States." May 3, 2023.

² Buecker S, Mund M, Chwastek S, Sostmann M, Luhmann M. Is loneliness in emerging adults increasing over time? A preregistered cross-temporal meta-analysis and systematic review. *Psychological Bulletin*. 2021;147(8):787.

³ Straus, E., Norman, S.B., Tripp, J.C., Tsai, J., Sippel, L.M., Jeste, D.V., Southwick, S.M., Pietrzak, R.H. Behavioral epidemic of loneliness in older U.S. military veterans: Results from the 2019-2020 National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study. *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. 2021; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jagp.2021.07.006>

⁴ Loneliness and Its Impact on the American Workplace. Cigna; March 2020. Accessed July 20, 2023. <https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/loneliness-and-its-impact-on-the-american-workplace.pdf>.



diversity in methodologies makes it extremely difficult to compare findings across studies, highlighting the crucial importance of standardizing measurements through this legislation.⁵ In addition, this reflects recommendations by both the National Academies and the U.S. Surgeon General to standardize the measurements for loneliness and isolation.

As such, the *Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act* will achieve the following goals:

- Collaboration, cooperation, and consultation among federal departments and agencies and state representatives with respect to developing standardized measurements of loneliness and isolation and standardized definitions of loneliness, isolation, and relevant terms.
- Assessment of the alignment of previous methods of measuring loneliness and isolation in the public and private sector.
- Report to Congress and the public describing the work and recommendations of the working group.

For these reasons, the Coalition⁶ and the undersigned organizations strongly support the passage of H.R. 6284, the bipartisan *Improving Measurements for Loneliness and Isolation Act*. If you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Coalition's Policy Manager, Rachel Jordan at rjordan@healthsprien.com.

Sincerely,

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Psychological Association Services
CaringBridge
Eventbrite
For All Ages
The Foundation For Art & Healing
Gary Community Ventures
Gerontological Society of America
Healthy Places by Design
Lyft, Inc
Meals on Wheels America
The Motion Picture & Television Fund
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
NeverTechLate, LLC
Presbyterian Villages of Michigan
Pyx Health
Resilient Georgia
Samaritan Healthcare & Hospice

⁵ Veazie S, Gilbert J, Winchell K, et al. Addressing Social Isolation To Improve the Health of Older Adults: A Rapid Review [Internet]. Rockville (MD): Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (US); 2019 Feb. Appendix F, Social Isolation and Loneliness Definitions and Measures. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537897/>

⁶ The Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness (CESIL) is a 501(c)(4) organization founded in 2018. It is a member organization formed to engage diverse stakeholders, increase public awareness, and advocate for policy change to address the adverse consequences of social isolation and loneliness and advance approaches that improve social connectedness for all Americans.