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National Hispanic Medical Association

June 29, 2020

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano  
Founder & Co-Chair, Congressional Mental Health Caucus  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1610 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support H.R. 6075, Immigrants Mental Health Act of 2020

Dear Congresswoman Napolitano,

On behalf of the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), representing the interests of 50,000 Hispanic physicians in the United States committed to improve the health of Hispanics and other underserved, I am writing to strongly support **H.R. 6075, Immigrants' Health Act of 2020**. In particular, NHMA supports this bill that would improve immigrant's mental health by the following:

- Develop and implement a training curriculum that would identify mental health risk factors and warning signs in immigrants and refugees and to address mental health and wellness of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers and agents;
- Direct the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to conduct an annual review of the training and include any recommendations for improvement;
- Assign at least one qualified mental or behavioral health expert to each CBP detention facility to adequately evaluate the mental health needs of immigrants, refugees, border patrol agents, and staff; and
- Prevent the Department of Health and Human Services from sharing and/or the Department of Homeland Security form requesting an immigrant's confidential mental health therapy notes for asylum determinations, immigration hearings or deportation proceedings.

This legislation is timely as CBP has used notes from mandatory confidential therapy sessions in deportation proceedings against immigrant children.<sup>1</sup> This information, voluntarily given by detainees to a mental health professional, is supposed to be private; thus, allowing this information to be shared with an agency to help determine asylum is unethical.

We applaud your efforts and want to reiterate that NHMA strongly supports H.R. 6075 because weaponizing words retrieved in a private conversation is a breach of trust. If you have any questions, please contact Ben Melano, Directors of Programs & Government Relations Officer at [bmelano@nhmamd.org](mailto:bmelano@nhmamd.org).

Sincerely,

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH, FACP  
President & CEO  
National Hispanic Medical Association

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/immigration-therapy-reports-ice/>