

May 18, 2022

Secretary Xavier Becerra  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Becerra:

Thank you for your leadership, and for your ongoing focus on America's mental health crisis. One often overlooked aspect of mental health is addressing grief. The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), the nation's largest membership organization for hospice and palliative care professions, and our hospice and palliative care members have more than 40 years of experience in helping individuals, families, and communities process grief. On behalf of NHPCO, I am requesting a meeting to discuss our national strategy on grief, and how hospice providers can be part of this Administration's response to our nation's mental health crisis.

As you know, the Medicare hospice benefit offers families of hospice patients 13 months of bereavement care after the death of their loved one. After national tragedies, like the recent mass shooting in Buffalo, hospice providers open their doors and make this valuable care available to their communities, outside of the hospice benefit, free of charge. Since the beginning of COVID-19, hospices across the country have played a critical role offering bereavement care to those who have lost loved ones. NHPCO and partner organizations have been working with Congress to make this critical mental health service available to everyone across the country without having to rely on philanthropy.

We are grateful for your leadership as the nation battles a mental health crisis. Together, we must play an active role in addressing this crisis, especially by expanding access to bereavement with funding for targeted care and research. As you continue to address the long-term effects of grief related to the COVID-19 pandemic and other mass casualty incidents, I hope to meet to discuss how hospice and palliative care providers can contribute towards this common goal. To schedule a meeting, please reach out to me at [ebanach@nhpco.org](mailto:ebanach@nhpco.org).

Sincerely,



Edo Banach, J.D.

President and CEO