



## National Lieutenant Governors Association

### 1           **Resolution to Increase Access to Mental and Behavioral Healthcare**

2   **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted or halted critical mental health services in 93% of  
3 countries worldwide while the demand for mental health increased (World Health Organization,  
4 10/5/20), and

5   **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic recession have negatively affected  
6 many Americans' mental health and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental  
7 illness and substance use disorders, and

8   **WHEREAS**, during the pandemic, about four in ten adults in the U.S. have reported symptoms of  
9 anxiety or depression, a share that has been largely consistent, and which is up from one in ten adults  
10 who reported these symptoms from January to June 2019, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation  
11 (KFF) (2/10/21), and

12 **WHEREAS**, mental and behavioral strife during the pandemic is happening against a backdrop of high  
13 rates of mental illness and substance use that existed prior to the current crisis (KFF), and

14 **WHEREAS**, history shows the mental health impact of disasters outlasts the physical impact,  
15 suggesting today's nationwide, elevated mental and behavioral health needs will continue well beyond  
16 the coronavirus outbreak itself (KFF), and

17 **WHEREAS**, mental and behavioral health care was inequitable prior to COVID so attention must also  
18 be paid to growing equity in mental health and substance use disorder care (Center for American  
19 Progress, 9/10/20), and

20 **WHEREAS**, as states and territories work on actions to alleviate the burdens of the COVID-19  
21 pandemic, it will be essential to consider how the increased need for mental health and substance use  
22 services have grown and will likely persist long term, even if and as new cases and deaths due to  
23 COVID-19 subside, and

24 **WHEREAS**, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration noted a current and  
25 growing shortage of mental health and substance use disorder professionals prior to the pandemic, and

26 **WHEREAS**, this shortage will grow as case demands continue to increase, and

27 **WHEREAS**, the use of interstate compacts and licensure reciprocity will increase the supply of mental  
28 and behavioral health, and substance use disorder treatment providers to meet the ever-increasing  
29 demand for such services within states, and



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30 **WHEREAS**, interstate compacts and reciprocity will enhance licensure portability for practitioners  
31 wishing to practice across state lines while allowing state boards to protect patients through enhanced  
32 sharing of licensure information.

33 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the National Lieutenant Governors Association  
34 (NLGA) encourages increased access to clinically-appropriate and evidence-based tele-health audio  
35 services by insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid to expand service to those who lack video-  
conferencing equipment or broadband service.

36 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the NLGA encourages states and territories to explore and engage  
37 in the use of interstate compacts and license reciprocity to allow professional counselors who are  
38 licensed in other states to serve patients located in their own states or territory.

ADOPTED, this day, the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 2021.

Sponsors: Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long (D – Delaware), Lt. Governor Dianne Primavera (D – Colorado),  
Lt. Governor Boyd Rutherford (R – Maryland)