

# Welcome to the Congressional Briefing on the Landmark Bi-Partisan “Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act of 2023”

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July 20, 2023

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Coordinator, International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)

Website: <http://itrcoalition.org>



**“Community is Medicine!”**



**Introducing Congressman Paul Tonko (D-NY)**



## **Introducing Congressman Don Bacon (R-NE)**

US is experiencing an epidemic of mental health & psychosocial conditions.

The Noted Pioneer Clinical Psychologist Dr. George Albee Once Said:

“No epidemic has ever been resolved by paying attention to the treatment of the affected individual.”

To address today's mental health epidemic—and prevent future ones--we must expand our nation's approach to mental health by embracing a

Public Health Approach

to

Mental Wellness and Resilience



# A Public Health Approach to Mental Wellness & Resilience

- Focuses on the **Entire Population**--- not merely on individuals with symptoms of pathology or high-risk groups--though they must be included by using “proportionate universalism” and “life-course” approaches:

We must **“Leave No One Behind.”**

- Prioritizes **Preventing Mental Health Problems Before They Occur** --- not merely reacting to or treating them after they emerge—and integrates group and community-minded Healing methods into the prevention strategies:

We must always remember that **“Prevention is the Cure!”**

- Does so by strengthening **“Protective Factors”** –social supports, resilience skills, habits, local resources etc. that build and sustain healthy thinking, behaviors and responses -- not just fixing deficits or treating symptoms of pathology:

We must **“Build Skills, Strengths, and Resources”**

- Research and ample experience shows that mental wellness and resilience **can be enhanced** and mental health problems can be **prevented & healed**.
- And that the **Most Effective Way** to do so is to:
  - establish the **“Social Infrastructure”** in communities—that can be called **Resilience Coordinating Networks (RCNs)**...
  - that engages a **broad and diverse array** of local residents, civic groups, non-profit, private, and public organizations...
  - in planning and implementing **locally chosen & tailored strategies** that strengthen the capacity of residents for mental wellness and resilience.



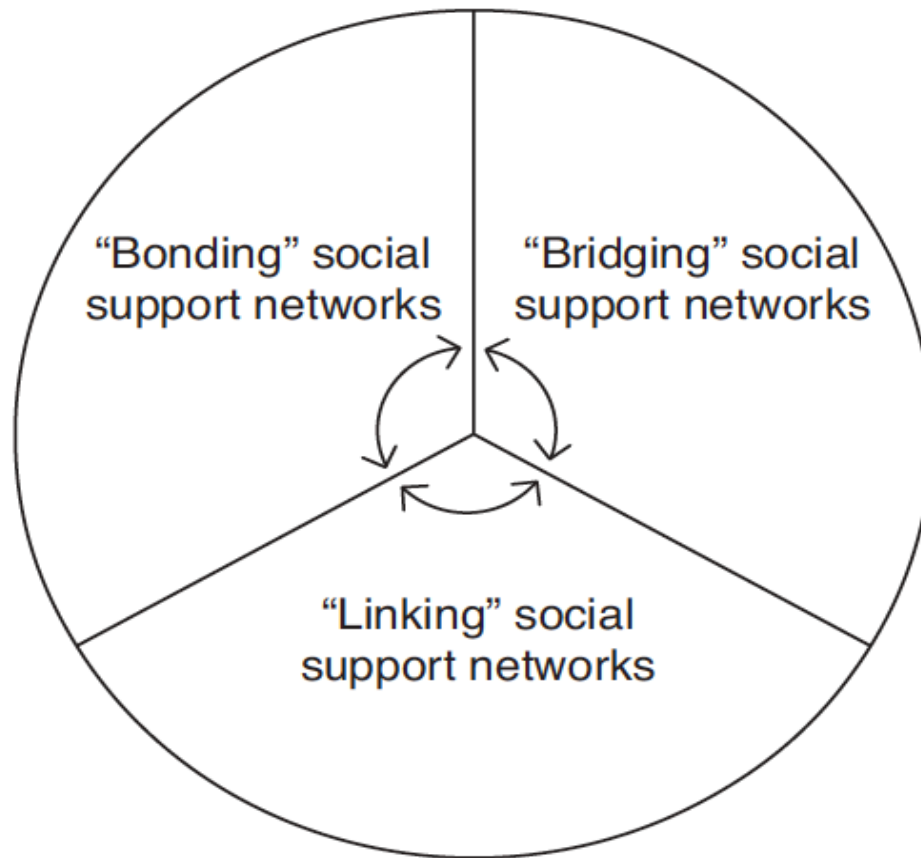
## A “Sample” Resilience Coordinating Network (RCN):

“Well-Coordinated Decentralization” using a “Ring Team” or “Hub and Spoke” Approach



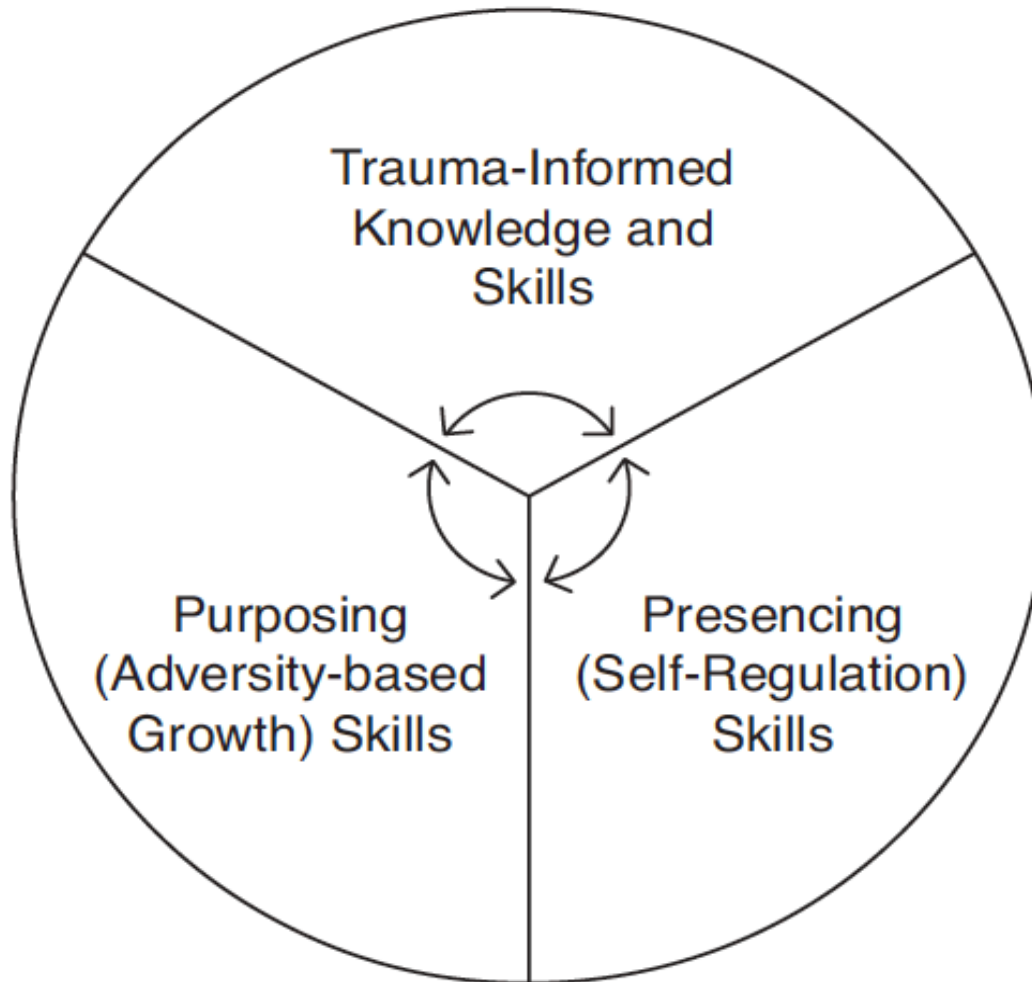
## ITRC Research Identified Five Foundational Areas Required to Build Population Capacity for Mental Wellness and Resilience

### Build Social Connections Across Cultural, Economic, and Geographic Boundaries in the Community



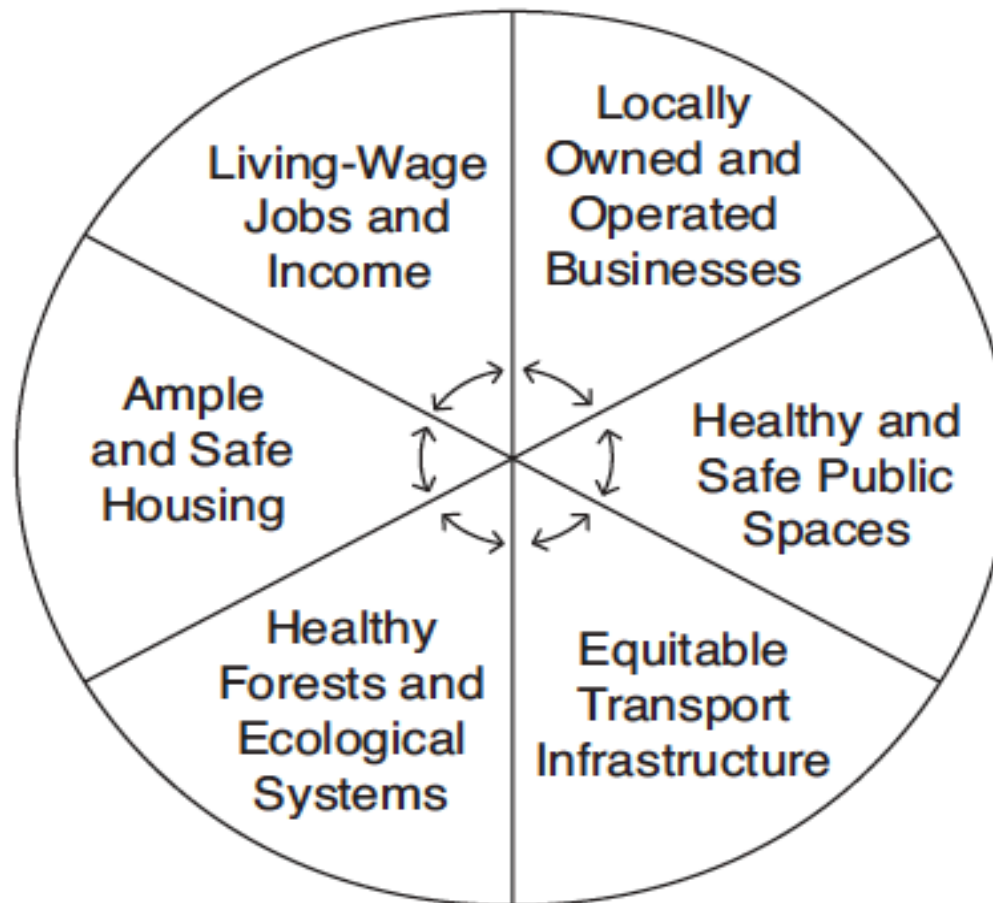
The Five Foundational Areas Required to  
Build Population Capacity for Mental Wellness and Resilience

Foster Universal “Literacy” About Mental Wellness and Resilience



## The Five Foundational Areas Required to Build Population Capacity for Mental and Resilience

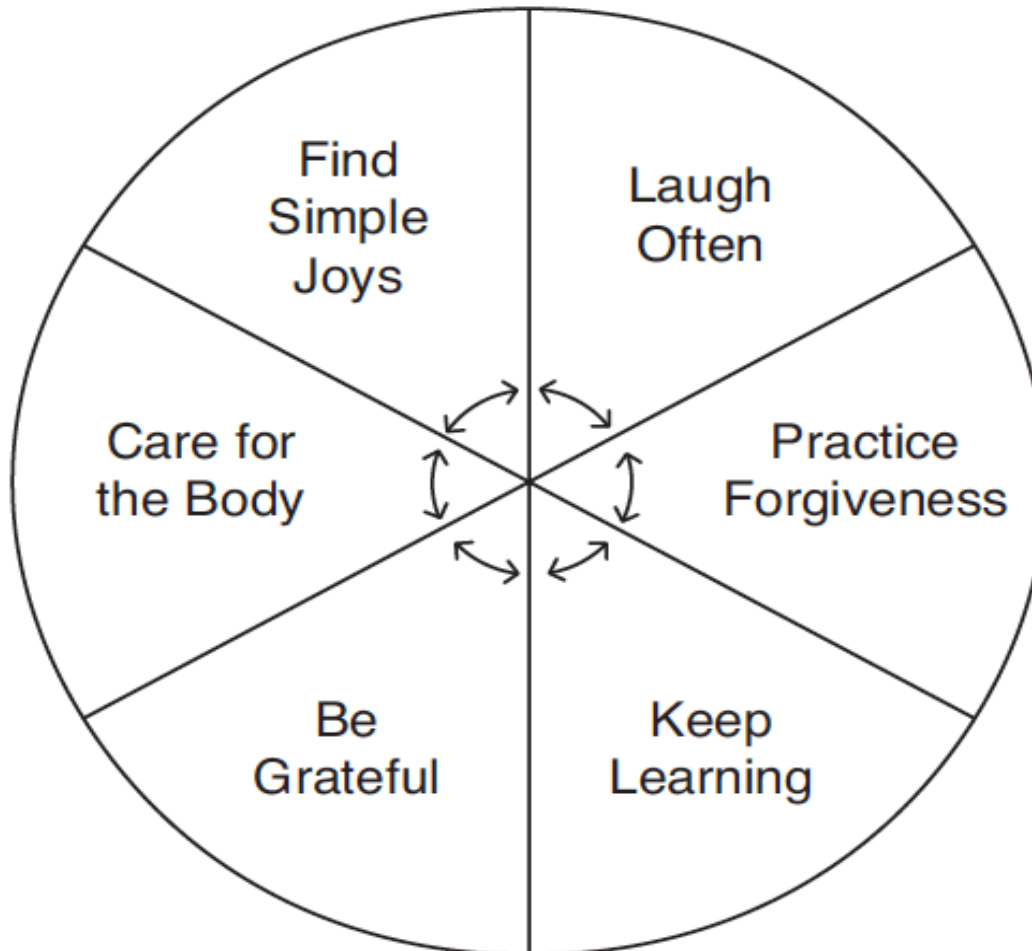
### Actively Engaging Residents in Building Healthy, Safe, Equitable, and Resilient Physical/Built, Economic, and Ecological Conditions





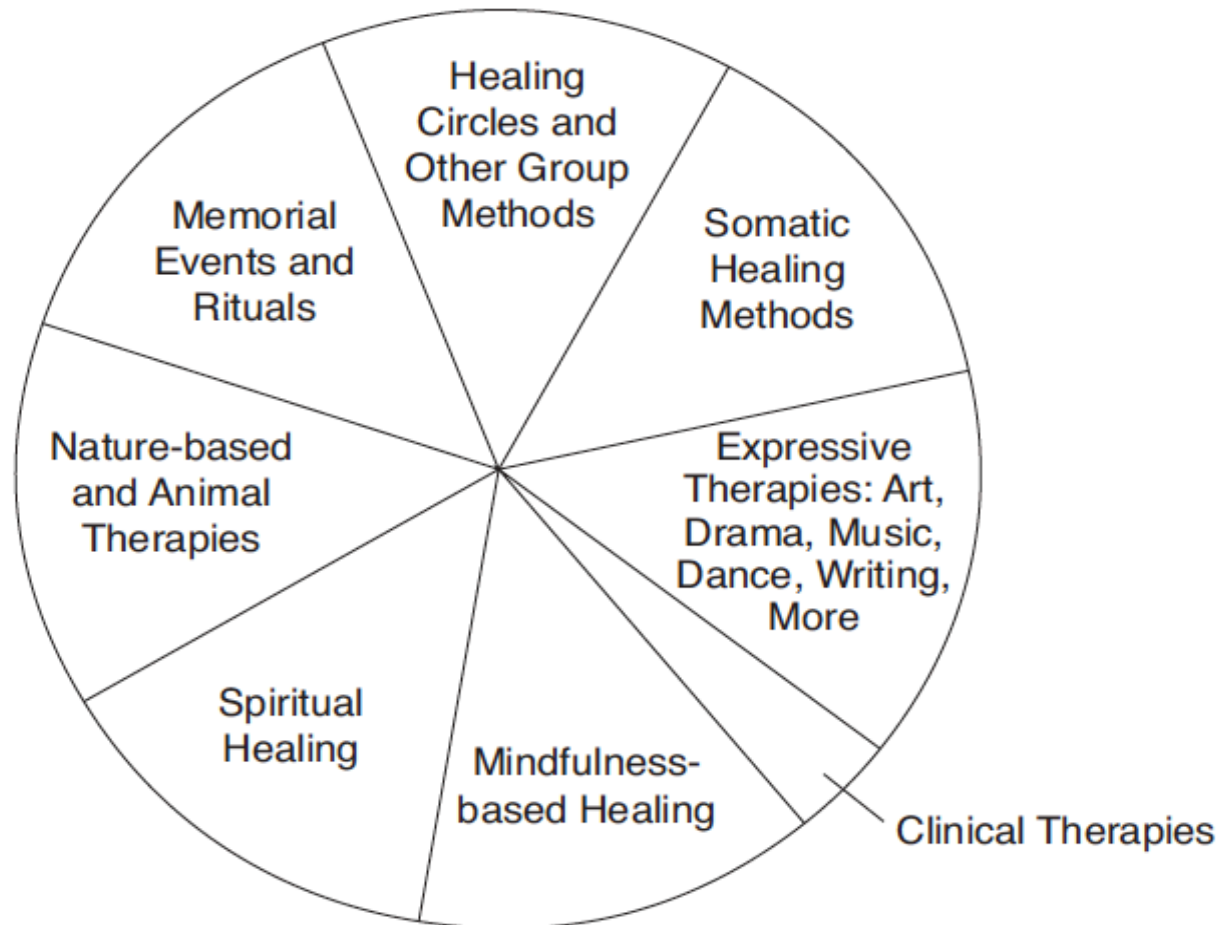
The Five Foundational Areas Required to  
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Help Residents Regularly Engage in Specific Practices that Enhance  
Mental Wellness and Resilience



# The Five Foundational Areas Required to Build Population Capacity for Mental Wellness and Resilience

## Establish Ongoing Age and Culturally Appropriate Mostly Peer-Led Group and Community-Minded Heal Methods



These Interventions Show How

# “Community is Medicine!”



# Government Has a *Very Important* Role to Play

- Most important is to **help establish the conditions** for Resilience Coordinating Networks **to be successful**.
- One key way to do this is to **provide start-up funds**, as well as **long-term funding** if Resilience Coordinating Networks **attain their objectives**.
- Government can also **enhance the credibility** of local Resilience Coordinating Networks by **publicly acknowledging them**, which will increase their ability to engage more people and raise other funds.
- They can also direct **public agencies** to **participate in** and **coordinate** their work with local Resilience Coordinating Networks.

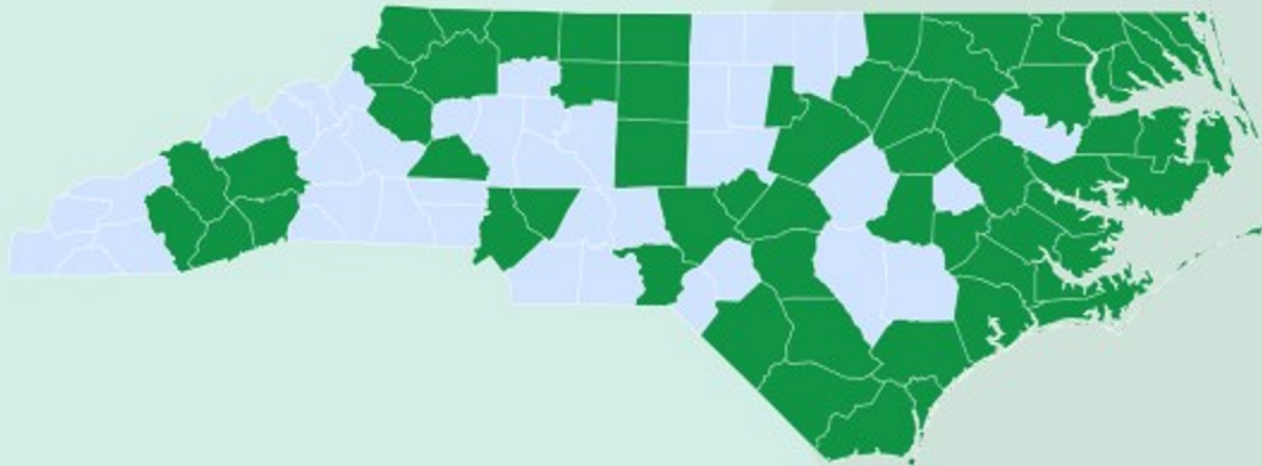
## “The Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act of 2023”

will authorize the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to:

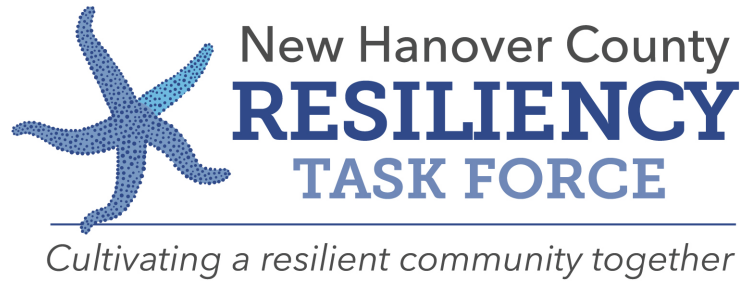
- Establish a “Planning Grant” of up to \$250,000 for one year to help communities organize Resilience Coordinating Networks.
- Establish an “Program Grant” of up to \$500,000 for up to 4 years to help support the implementation and continual improvement Resilience Coordinating Networks.
- Establish 20% Funding Set-Asides for “Rural” communities.
- Establish a CDC Technical Assistance Program to help community groups develop grant proposals and help funded participants learn from each other.
- Appropriates \$36 million for the program.

**Mebane Boyd, Resilient Communities Officer**  
**North Carolina Partnership for Children,  
Healthy and Resilient Communities Program**

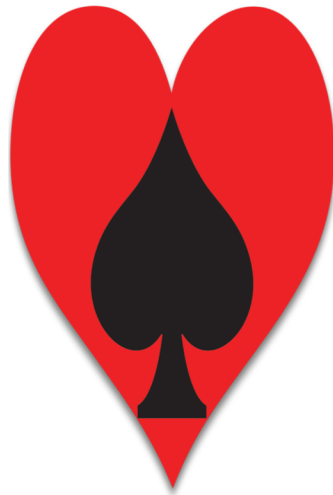
North Carolina Resilience Coalitions



# Tina Pearson, Director New Hanover County Resiliency Task Force



Becky Turner, Director of Community Engagement  
Community Resilience Initiative, Walla Walla WA.



**COMMUNITY**  
RESILIENCE INITIATIVE



Charlotte Eure, Coordinator

## Virginia's Trauma-Informed Community Networks



VIRGINIA'S TRAUMA-INFORMED COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Robin Saenger, Founding Director  
Peace4Tarpon, Tarpon Springs, FL.



- **Only a few** of the initiatives frame their work as a **public health approach**—and **none** address all of the 5 foundational areas our research identified.
- **Each is unique** because they are organized to address the issues, needs, and demographics of their community: there is **no one-size-fits-all approach**.



But if these existing initiatives are **strengthened**, and **thousands** of **new** community initiatives are **launched nationwide**

**We CAN Reduce Today's Mental Health Epidemic**

*and*

**Prevent Future Ones!**

# Comments by Leaders of National Organizations

Dr. David Shern, Senior Public Health Advisor,  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

Sarah Butts, Director of Public Policy,  
National Association of Social Workers

Katherine Catalano, Deputy Director, Center for Climate and Health Equity  
American Public Health Association

Ruben Cantu, Director, Safety and Wellbeing Team,  
Prevention Institute

Dr. Joshua Wortzel, Chair, Committee on Climate Change and Mental Health,  
American Psychiatric Association

# SUMMARY

## The “Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act of 2023” is Landmark

- Because it will **expand** the US approach to mental health...
- By actively engaging **communities** in using a **public health** approach...
- To build residents capacity for **mental wellness** and **resilience** to **prevent and heal** traumas.

## The Benefits Will Be Far-Reaching

- Protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities
- Reduce demands on healthcare system
- Strengthen the wellness and resilience of mental health, human services, physical health, and community safety providers
- Enhance employability, and safeguard local businesses and the economy
- Build the social efficacy and common purpose needed to address today's problems

## If Your Organization Supports The “Community Mental Wellness and Resilience Act of 2023”

- Please **contact** your **House** and **Senate Members** to state your support and urge them to swiftly enact the legislation.
- Please tell your **members and partners** about the legislation and urge them to contact their House and Senate members to urge enactment
- **Add your organization** to the **over 150** national, state, and local organizations that have already endorsed the CMWRA.

**Go to the ITRC Website for Information on How To Do The Above:**

**<http://itrcoalition.org>**



**Thank You for Attending Today's Congressional Briefing!**

**For more information contact the  
International Transformational Resilience Coalition (ITRC)**

Email: [tr@trig-cli.org](mailto:tr@trig-cli.org)

Website: <http://itrcoalition.org>