

ALEX PADILLA

U.S. SENATOR *for* CALIFORNIA

The Mental Health for Latinos Act

We are experiencing a mental health crisis in the Latino Community, yet disparities within our healthcare system are preventing Latino communities from receiving life-saving mental health services.

These barriers to care, which existed long before COVID, are causing too many to suffer in silence. Presently, only 36.1% of Latino adults aged 18 or older with a mental illness received services in 2021, compared to the U.S. average of 47.2%. Between 2010 and 2020, the suicide rate among male Latino adults (ages 20 to 64) increased by 35.7%, and the female rate increased by 40.6%. Even those who are able to access services rarely receive the effective, culturally competent care they need.

This bill would boost our continued efforts to reduce stigma and promote mental wellness while meeting the diverse needs of Latino communities across the country. As our nation confronts an unfolding mental health crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this critical legislation reinforces the timeless message that there is zero shame in asking for help and that seeking support is a sign of strength.

What would the Mental Health for Latinos Act do?

The legislation would direct the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a strategy to:

- Provide information on evidence-based practices, interventions, and treatments that are culturally and linguistically appropriate
- Increase awareness of symptoms of mental illnesses common among such populations, considering differences within subgroups, such as gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity
- Ensure full participation of both consumers and community members in the development and implementation of materials
- Meet the diverse cultural and language needs of the various Latino and Hispanic populations; and address the impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on the mental and behavioral health of Latino and Hispanic population