# Senator Fetterman Introduces Bill for Federal Commission on Mental Health



Senator John Fetterman (D-PA), who openly discussed his battle with severe depression, has introduced a bill to establish a federal commission on mental health. Co-sponsored by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN), the proposed commission aims to provide policy recommendations to Congress and the President to improve access and affordability of mental health care. Announced last week, the bill's first-year agenda includes studying federal health plan coverage, mental health care reimbursement rates, and workforce challenges in the field.

Fetterman, who spent six weeks at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in early 2023 for depression treatment, emphasized that mental health should be integrated with overall health. The hospitalization followed a stroke he suffered during his campaign.

The bill has garnered support from several organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Both Fetterman and Smith, who has also shared her experiences with depression, are part of the bipartisan Senate Mental Health Caucus, focusing on mutual mental health issues.

Smith previously addressed her struggle with depression as a teenager and in her thirties within the context of advocating for increased federal mental health funding. Smith revisited the topic in a 2023 essay, aligning with Fetterman's public journey.

The commission would generate annual reports and work as an advisory body distinct from legislative committees, offering strategic insights and recommendations to enhance mental health services nationally.