



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**National Council of Behavioral Health Awards Patrick J. Kennedy Inaugural “Distinguished Service Award” at NatCon19 Awards Celebration**  
***Kennedy to deliver NatCon19 “Thought Leaders” keynote address March 26***

**Nashville, T.N. / March 26, 2019** – Patrick J. Kennedy, former U.S. Representative (D-RI), lead sponsor of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, and founder of The Kennedy Forum and of DontDenyMe.org, will be awarded the National Council of Behavioral Health’s “Distinguished Service Award” during a ceremony held as part of the National Council’s behavioral health conference, NatCon19, taking place March 25 – 27 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Kennedy is being recognized for his tireless advocacy on behalf of people of all ages living with mental illness and substance use disorder; for his work in promoting mental health legislation; for supporting brain research; and for sharing his own story to help end stigma and ease the social burden of others living with mental illness.

“I am honored to present the first-ever National Council Distinguished Service Award to my friend – and a friend to the behavioral health community – the Honorable Patrick Kennedy,” says Linda Rosenberg, President & CEO of National Council for Behavioral Health. “With this award, we honor Patrick’s ongoing work in securing equal treatment for mental illnesses and addictions and his firm conviction that we can’t separate the head from the body.”

Kennedy will also be among NatCon19 featured speakers, delivering a keynote address entitled “An Urgent Matter of Access: Pursuing Parity Amid the Greatest Public Health Crisis of Our Time” as part of NatCon19’s “Thought Leaders” series Tuesday, March 26, 2019 from 10 – 11 a.m.

NatCon19, the National Council for Behavioral Health’s annual behavioral health conference, will take place March 25 – 27 at the Gaylord Opryland in Nashville, Tennessee. According to its website, the event, a premier behavioral health conference, will host more than 5,000 attendees. It will also mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the National Council for Behavioral Health.

For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/>

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**About The Kennedy Forum**

Founded in 2013 by former Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy (D-R.I.), The Kennedy Forum leads a national dialogue on transforming the health care system by uniting mental health advocates, business leaders, and government agencies around a common set of principles, including full implementation of the Federal Parity Law. Launched in celebration of the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy’s signing of the landmark Community Mental Health Act, the nonprofit aims to achieve health equity by advancing evidence-based practices, policies, and programming for the treatment of mental health and addiction. The Kennedy Forum’s “Don’t Deny Me” [campaign](#) empowers patients and their loved ones to report illegal insurance denials of mental health and addiction treatment, and fight for their parity rights. To learn more about The Kennedy Forum and donate, please visit [www.thekennedyforum.org](http://www.thekennedyforum.org).