

# Patrick Kennedy

**Former United States Representative, Rhode Island; Co-Founder, One Mind and Founder, The Kennedy Forum**

Please contact a GDA agent for information.

## Topics

- Addiction & Recovery
- Healthcare
- Mental Health & Stress Management
- Politics & Current Events

## About Patrick Kennedy

During his 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, serving Rhode Island's First Congressional District, Patrick J. Kennedy fought to end discrimination against mental illness, addiction, and other brain diseases. He is best known as the lead sponsor of the groundbreaking Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which was passed with bipartisan support, and signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 3, 2008. The Federal Parity Law provides millions of Americans, previously denied care, with access to mental health and addiction treatment by requiring insurance companies to treat illnesses of the brain, such as depression and addiction, the same way they treat illnesses of the body, such as diabetes and cancer.

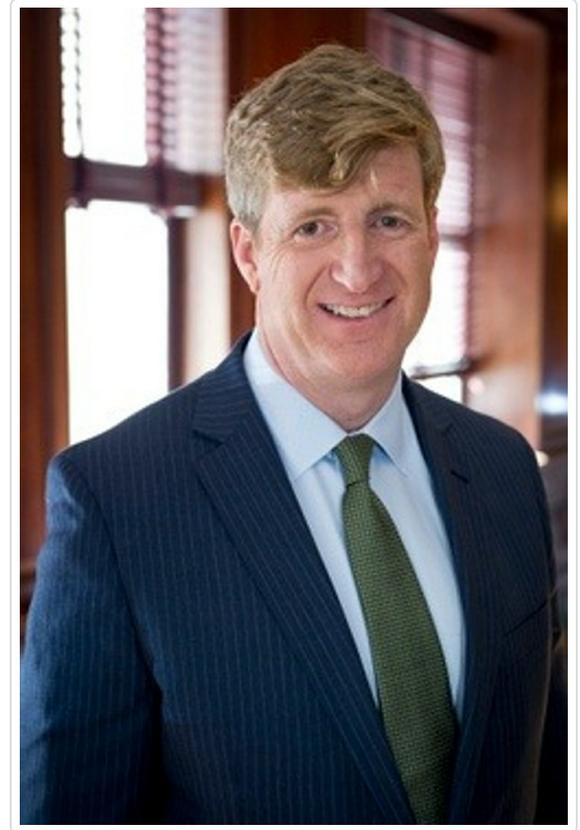
In addition to the Federal Parity Law, Kennedy authored and co-sponsored dozens of bills during his time in Congress to increase the understanding and treatment of neurological and psychiatric disorders, including the Positive Aging Act; Foundations for Learning Act; National Neurotechnology Initiative Act; Genomics and Personalized Medicine Act; COMBAT PTSD Act; Nurse-Family Partnership Act; Alzheimer's Treatment and Caregiver Support Act; and Ready, Willing, and Able Act, which called on the Department of Homeland Security to deploy a civilian response system to blunt the psychological impact of terrorism. He served on various committees and subcommittees, including the House Appropriations Committee; the Subcommittee on Health, Education and Welfare; the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education; and the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs.

After the death of his father, Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy in 2011, Patrick J. Kennedy left Congress to devote his career to mental health advocacy and enforcement of the Federal Parity Law, pursue a healthier lifestyle, and start a family.

In 2013, he founded The Kennedy Forum, a non-profit organization whose mission is to lead a national dialogue on transforming mental health and addiction care delivery 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 Forum aims to achieve health equity by advancing evidence-based practices, policies, and programming in mental health and substance use.

The Kennedy Forum's collaborative partnerships help to foster greater provider accountability, integration, and coordination; cutting-edge technologies; and brain fitness and education. The non-profit organization publishes frequent issue briefs and is a repository of other educational resources on parity issues, such as Navigating the New Frontier of Mental Health and Addiction: a Guide for the 115th Congress—the first-ever guide for Members of Congress that pinpoints and defines tangible actions necessary for change; Parity Registry—a website where consumers can find guidance and register complaints against insurance companies after being wrongfully denied coverage for mental health or addiction treatment; and Parity Track—a website where legislators, policymakers, journalists, consumers, and others can track legislative, regulatory, and legal parity activities in all 50 states.

As co-founder of One Mind (formerly One Mind for Research), Kennedy helped spark a global revolution in how scientists collaborate to study, diagnose, and treat brain diseases. The organization pushes for greater global investment in brain research, which Kennedy has called "the next great frontier in medicine," and is pioneering a worldwide approach that ensures scientific research, results, and data are available to researchers everywhere. Current initiatives are accelerating the discovery of better diagnostics, treatments, and cures for post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. The next step will be to extend One Mind's open science principles to increase the pace of cures and treatments for all brain diseases, including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, ALS, addiction, and depression.



Inspired by his work in both organizations, but still facing the daily struggle to fight stigma, in 2015, Kennedy co-authored the New York Times Bestseller, "A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction." The narrative details Kennedy's personal struggles, as well as his bold plan for the future of mental health care in America. In breaking his family's "code of silence," Kennedy openly challenged the stigma and shame commonly surrounding families trying to cope with mental illness and/or addiction.

In the spring of 2017, Kennedy was appointed to serve on the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. The Commission, chaired by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, studied ways to combat and treat the scourge of drug abuse and addiction in the U.S., ultimately delivering a final report of recommendations to President Donald Trump. Kennedy's personal contributions focused on the declaration of a federal emergency. He also pushed the Commission to issue strong parity recommendations, which included asking Congress to give the Department of Labor authority to levy civil monetary penalties against health insurers and asking all regulators to use a standardized tool when performing parity compliance investigations.

Kennedy provides strategic guidance on mental health, intellectual disabilities, and public service by serving as a board member for many influential, cause-driven organizations, including: Best Buddies, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), the Edward M. Kennedy Institute, the International Bipolar Foundation, the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation, and the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

He has been formally recognized for his mental health advocacy and leadership many times over the years. He is the recipient of the National Recovery Champion Award, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Humanitarian Award, the American Psychiatric Association Patient Advocacy Award, the New York Academy of Science Breaking the Chains of Stigma Award, the Society for Neuroscience Public Service Award, the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology Distinguished Service Award, the Clifford Beers Foundation Centennial Award, the Autism Society of America Congressional Leadership Award, the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Paul Wellstone Mental Health Award, the Epilepsy Foundation Public Service Award, and the NAMI Humanitarian of the Year Award, among others.

Amid countless recognitions, meaningful partnerships, and political affiliations, Patrick J. Kennedy's most important achievement continues to be leveraging his powerful family legacy in the arenas of civil rights, mental health, and intellectual disabilities to advance the cause of social justice and health equity for all people. He lives in New Jersey with his wife, Amy, and their five children.

## Select Keynotes

- **Healthcare's Next Frontier: The Race to Inner Space**

More than 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy asked Americans to think big, engage in the world beyond their own backyards, and make public service an integral component of everyday life. Part of the president's cutting-edge approach to governing was to set audacious, seemingly unreachable goals...and exceed them. One of those goals was also the most storied, and most impactful: a call to reach the moon in a decade, catalyzing what is now known as the "space race." Today, Patrick J. Kennedy believes we're in a new space race, but it's not about reaching a new planet, or exploring the cosmos. It's a race of a different kind – a race to "inner-space," a quest to understand the brain and brain health as much as we sought to understand the surface of the moon. The stakes are clear – 1 in 4 Americans are touched by mental illness, whether personally or through the experience of a family member. Almost 20 million Americans have a substance abuse issue. More than 8 million people in this country have had a serious suicidal thought. What binds these statistics together? A need to understand the underlying science of the brain, how it works, how it becomes compromised, and what we can do to achieve brain health. Patrick J. Kennedy will discuss new advances in science and policy that are leading the way toward a deeper understanding of "inner space," and the role we all play in achieving the goal of making mental healthcare as routine, accessible, and understandable as physical healthcare.

- **How to Fix the Mental Health System**

An overwhelming majority of the public agrees that mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and alcohol or drug abuse are serious public health problems. Almost as many believe that the current way we are handling mental health needs to change. This presentation will focus on the necessary steps that will fulfill President Kennedy's vision of ensuring the best possible mental well-being for every American. Discussion topics will include implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, ways to accelerate advances in diagnostics, treatments and cures, and how we can integrate mental health into the mainstream of American medicine. The result will be improved outcomes for patients and lower costs for everyone.

- **My Journey: Making Mental Health Essential Health**

Since his earliest days in public service, Patrick J. Kennedy believed that mental health should be a national priority. After 16 years in Congress, and countless bills passed, one stands out among the rest for the impact it has on the lives of all Americans – the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. This bill ensures that mental health is treated on-par with physical health, breaking down decades-old practices in the health care system that kept those two areas separate from one another, often with dire consequences. Patrick J. Kennedy will discuss why mental health is critical to the overall health and wellbeing of all Americans, why the healthcare system needs to adapt to better accommodate mental healthcare, the underlying public policy imperatives of parity and why we need to invest in innovation. Kennedy will also discuss his own journey toward mental health and recovery, and how he sees the world today.

- **Patrick Can Deliver Keynotes on the Following Topics**

1. The pursuit of mental health equity
2. The role of the Federal Parity Law
3. The need for health care integration
4. Technology's role in mental health care

5. Brain health as an essential part of overall health
6. Combatting the opioid crisis
7. Roadmap for a better health care system
8. National and state advocacy work
9. Workplace mental health

### Select Book Titles

- **2024:** Profiles in Mental Health Courage
- **2015:** A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction

### Select Articles

- [Expanding Access to Care Through Telepsychiatry](#)

This prompts the question, how do we effectively address the lack of mental health care available? With a shortage in the overall behavioral health workforce, there are simply not enough psychiatrists to meet the demand which is why a more immediate solution like telepsychiatry is necessary.

### Select Testimonials

Congressman Kennedy's speech was like a shot of espresso for the mind and soul. His unique experiences as a person in recovery and an impassioned public policy voice for increasing access to care make him a mustsee speaker. He was outstanding."

— *Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas*