

Mental Health Liaison Group

November 29, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
1705 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Whip Hoyer:

We, the undersigned organizations, write today in strong support of mental health reform provisions contained in the bicameral and bipartisan end-of-year healthcare package currently being advanced, and we urge the House to pass these provisions as soon as possible.

As you know, we have a mental health crisis in this country. Over 68 million Americans have experienced a mental health or substance use disorder in the past year, which is more than 20 percent of the total population of the United States. Lifetime rates are much higher with some estimates approaching 50 percent. More striking, in 2014, nearly 43,000 Americans died by suicide. Many individuals with mental health or substance use conditions are unable to access or receive the appropriate services and supports for these disorders, and they remain constantly challenged by mental health service delivery systems that are largely fragmented and uncoordinated across the country.

Thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA), Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), and others, Congress has prioritized mental health reform efforts over the past three years. We are pleased that the underlying healthcare package incorporates H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, which passed the House nearly unanimously in July. These important bipartisan provisions strengthen federal coordination of mental health resources, increase reporting on mental health parity, advance integrated service delivery, support the mental health workforce, increase early access to mental health services, promote suicide prevention, and enact meaningful reforms to criminal justice systems.

The need for reform is urgent, and you have the opportunity to act now to improve the lives of tens of millions of Americans, their families, and our communities.

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Laurel Stine, J.D., American Psychological Association at lstine@apa.org
and Debbie Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Mental Health America at dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net

We urge you to enact mental health reform legislation this year.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Center for Clinical Social Work
The Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Emergency Nurses Association
The Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Health Care for the Homeless Council*
National League for Nursing
The National Multiple Sclerosis Society*
The National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health without Mental Health
Parity Implementation Coalition**
Sandy Hook Promise
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
School Social Work Association of America
Tourette Association of America
The Trevor Project
Trinity Health, Livonia MI*

*Affiliate Member

**not MHLG member