

Mental Health Liaison Group

September 28, 2016

The Honorable Richard Durbin
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Durbin and Representative Schakowsky:

The undersigned national organizations of the Mental Health Liaison Group are pleased to write in support of the *Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act* (S. 2685/ H.R. 4374), important legislation that will assist colleges and universities in successfully addressing the growing mental health needs on our nation's college campuses.

Research shows that one-half of all chronic mental health problems begin by age 14, and three-quarters by age 24. The American College Health Association's most recent National College Health Assessment Survey found that 57% of students reported feeling overwhelming anxiety, and 37% reported feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function. In 2014, data from the American College Counseling Association's National Survey of College Counseling Centers revealed that more than half their clients had severe psychological problems – an increase of 13% in just two years. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities across the nation are ill-equipped to address the growing mental health needs of their communities.

In an effort to address these serious problems that can lead to academic failure or in the most extreme case – suicide, the *Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act* establishes a grant program for colleges and universities to foster a comprehensive approach in addressing mental and behavioral health issues on campus. This includes the expansion of mental and behavioral health services on campus; provision of education and outreach services to students, families, faculty, and staff; development of evidence-based best practices; and dissemination of best practices to other colleges and universities. In addition, this legislation calls for the establishment of a national public health awareness campaign focused on college mental health, which would work to reduce the stigma associated with seeking help on college campuses.

We are grateful for your efforts to ensure that college students with mental and behavioral health problems get the support they need through the *Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act*. We look forward to working with you to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability*
American Counseling Association

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

American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
IC&RC, International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health without Mental Health
Sandy Hook Promise
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders of America
School Social Work Association of America
The Trevor Project
Treatment Communities of America

*MHLG Affiliate Group