

February 8, 2016

The Honorable Tony Cárdenas
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cárdenas:

On behalf of organizations dedicated to improving the behavioral health of all Americans, we are writing to express our support for the *Protecting Youth from Solitary Confinement Act* (H.R. 2823). This important legislation would prohibit the use of solitary confinement for juveniles in federal custody, and would mandate data collection on the frequency of solitary confinement in the United States.

Solitary confinement is the placement of an incarcerated individual in a locked room or cell with minimal or no contact with other people. Prolonged solitary confinement is associated with an increased risk of self-mutilation, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, paranoia, and aggression. Research demonstrates that adolescents are still developing in neurological, cognitive, and emotional domains, and are therefore at particular risk of these negative consequences. Moreover, juveniles enter facilities with disproportionately high rates of mental illness and trauma, and are particularly in need of social interaction for psychosocial and brain development, both of which mean that solitary confinement may be especially harmful for them.

As behavioral scientists and mental health experts, we recognize the harm of juvenile solitary confinement and the importance of H.R. 2823. We fully support your continued efforts to ensure that the elimination of juvenile solitary confinement is incorporated into any prison reform measure in the House of Representatives. Thank you for your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you and your staff to combat the damaging practice of juvenile solitary confinement.

Sincerely,

American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC)
Association of Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Center for Clinical Social Work
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Coalition for Juvenile Justice

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
First Focus Campaign for Children
Legal Action Center
Mental Health America
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Counties
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability
Directors
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
No Health without Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
The Trevor Project