

Mental Health Liaison Group

December 2, 2016

Dear Senator:

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 (H.R. 34), and we urge you to support passage of the package when it reaches the Senate floor.

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 illnesses, 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 Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Patty Murray (D-WA), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Chris Murphy (D-CT), John Cornyn (T-TX), Al Franken (D-MN) and others, the Senate has prioritized mental health reform efforts over the past three years. We are pleased that the underlying healthcare package incorporates S. 2680, the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016, which unanimously passed out of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee earlier this year. 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,

We are also pleased that the healthcare package incorporates provisions from S. 2002, the Mental Health and Safe Communities Act of 2015, and S. 993, the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act to link non-violent individuals with mental illness with treatment instead of incarceration.

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.

The House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 34 Wednesday evening. We urge you to follow suit so that meaningful mental health reform can be enacted this year.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

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 Association on Health and Disability
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
Clinical Social Work Guild 49
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 Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
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
Treatment Communities of America
The Trevor Project
Trinity Health, Livonia MI*

*Affiliate Member

**not MHLG member