

# Mental Health Liaison Group

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Senate Health Education Labor &  
Pensions (HELP) Committee  
725 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Health Education Labor &  
Pension (HELP) Committee  
525 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## **RE: Support for The Mental Health Reform Act of 2016**

Dear Senator Alexander and Senator Murray:

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)- a coalition of national organizations representing consumers/patients, family members, advocates, professionals and providers- is writing to express our support for the Mental Health Reform Act. It is our hope that this important bipartisan measure will be joined with key Senate Finance Committee Medicaid and Medicare behavioral health reforms during Senate floor consideration.

The Mental Health Reform Act makes balanced and judicious amendments to laws governing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). By formalizing the partnership between SAMHSA and the HHS Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) while explicitly authorizing a strategic planning process, the HELP Committee measure strengthens SAMHSA's ability to coordinate policy across both HHS and other executive branch agencies. The Inter-departmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee could make a major contribution in this same area. It is MHLG's fervent hope that this body will be as effective as the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) in galvanizing federal resources and multi-agency action.

The Mental Health Reform Act also provides authorizing legislation for a wide array of critically important initiatives including Grants for Jail Diversion, Primary Care Behavioral Health Integration (PBCHI) Grants (as one aspect of achieving full integrated medical-behavioral care in all settings), the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, and the HRSA-SAMHSA Mental and Behavioral Health Training Program. Provisions of the HELP Committee package that would strengthen enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act are also vitally important to help improve health insurance plan compliance and increase patients' access to mental health care.

(over)

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

Again, we appreciate the hard bipartisan work that went into producing the Mental Health Reform Act. We look forward to working with the HELP Committee closely as the legislative process unfolds.

Sincerely,

American Association of Pastoral Counselors  
American Association on Health and Disability \*  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
CHADD- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Clinical Social Work Guild  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of Counties \*  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Council for Behavioral Health  
National League for Nursing  
National Register of Health Service Psychologists  
No Health without Mental Health  
School Social Work Association of America  
Treatment Communities of America

\*MHLG Observer Group