

Mental Health Liaison Group

October 27, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Alexander and Murray:

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)—a coalition of national organizations representing mental health consumers and patients, family members, advocates, professionals and providers—is writing to urge your committee to take up comprehensive mental health system reform legislation introduced by Senators Bill Cassidy and Chris Murphy, S. 1945, the “Mental Health Reform Act of 2015.”

Doing so would continue the committee’s important work in this area, following its approval of S. 1893, your legislation to reauthorize and improve the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, and other programs aimed at increasing awareness, prevention, and early identification of mental health conditions. We support enactment of S. 1893, but also believe more comprehensive reforms are needed to improve our nation’s failing mental health service delivery system.

The Cassidy-Murphy legislation would expand Americans’ access to inpatient psychiatric services; improve coordination between federal agencies; foster integration of physical and mental health services delivery; promote appropriate, effective sharing of individuals’ mental health treatment information; establish new grant programs for early intervention, support preventive services; and bolster enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. It is urgent that Congress enact legislation like S. 1945 soon, in order to provide more effective prevention and treatment measures, more timely access, and improve the continuity of care within our mental health system.

We applaud you for your continued bipartisanship on mental health policy issues, and we pledge to continue working with you to advance mental health reform efforts through the Senate.

Sincerely,

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Pastoral Counselors

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 College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) *
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
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Emergency Nurses Association
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Inc. - ANAD
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
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
NHMH - No Health without Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
State of Connecticut Office of the Healthcare Advocate *
The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Watershed Addiction Treatment Programs, Inc. *
Tourette Association of America
Treatment Communities of America

*not a MHLG member