

Mental Health Liaison Group

October 17, 2011

Honorable John Boehner
Speaker, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned national behavioral health organizations, representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers, urge you and your colleagues to reject the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill (HR 3070) that guts funding for mental health and addiction services and supports by a whopping 8.4 percent – a crippling, irreversible cut that would take years to recover. This bill comes on the heel of cuts imposed in FY 2011 and only further decimates critical programs that ensure a strong public behavioral health infrastructure.

It is shocking and troubling that HR 3070 would single out behavioral health for such deep cuts at a time when states have cut back funding for mental health care by nearly \$3.4 billion over the last 3 years. This funding supports services which all play a critical role in helping individuals with, or at risk of, a mental health and/or substance use condition achieve recovery and live a productive life in the community.

The brunt of the cuts to public health included in the bill would be borne by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In fact, HR 3070 cuts mental health funding by almost 25 percent – that would place their funding at the same level as nearly 12 years ago. The prevention portfolio at SAMHSA would be particularly hit hard at a time when the Institute of Medicine, in a 2009 report, declared that the prevention of mental health and substance abuse conditions among young people must be a national priority.

On the heels of the Arizona tragedy, more deaths from suicide (more than 34,000) than traffic fatalities, record number of suicides among servicemembers, a growing number of young people facing mental health and addiction problems (half of all people with a mental health condition will have the first onset by age of 14) and our youth and adults being overrepresented in the

criminal justice system, our nation's response to this crisis cannot nor should it be to decimate the principal agency dedicated to addressing this population.

Every day, we read about the impact on the behavioral health of Americans being exacerbated by economic problems and how funding for essential and basic services is dwindling. It is never a good idea to cut funding for mental health and addiction services, and this is an especially bad time that will only exacerbate what is a clearly a public health crisis.

In addition, we lament the zero-ing out of the Prevention and Public Health Fund in HR 3070 because it is critical to invest in proven prevention activities that we know will work to reduce health care costs and keep Americans healthier, including steps that promote integration of behavioral and overall health care and improve screening.

We are deeply troubled with the House approach to behavioral and public health funding and strongly urge Congressional Leaders to adopt the Senate's Labor, HHS spending bill crafted by Sen. Tom Harkin that takes a much more balanced approach by rejecting deep cuts to public health agencies.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychotherapy Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild OPEIU 49

Eating Disorders Coalition
Emergency Nurses Association
Mental Health America
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
Treatment Communities of America
US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)

cc: Honorable Denny Rehberg, Chairman, House Labor, Health and Human Services and
Education Appropriations Subcommittee

Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, House Labor, Health and Human Services
and Education Appropriations Subcommittee