

Mental Health Liaison Group

July 17, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cochran, Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group, the undersigned organizations are writing today to urge your support for important prevention and treatment priorities in Fiscal Year 2018. The Mental Health Liaison Group is a coalition of national organizations representing mental health and substance use consumers, providers, family members, and other concerned citizens. Together, on behalf of the millions of Americans living with mental health and substance use disorders, their families and communities, we advocate for public policies and funding to improve access to high-quality care.

Far too many Americans living with a mental health or substance use disorder are unable to access needed treatment. For example, among teens with a major depressive episode in the last year, just 38 percent received treatment. Only 2.5 million of the 22.7 million Americans with a drug or alcohol use disorder received treatment for their condition in 2013 – that’s a mere 11 percent.¹ The programs outlined in our attached Appropriations Recommendations support these individuals and the health professionals who serve them by funding high-quality, clinically appropriate treatment and support initiatives. Our recommendations also bolster prevention efforts that help avert the need for treatment before issues arise. By expanding our nation’s investment in these important programs, we can help create healthier communities and ensure that all Americans can access the treatment they need, when they need it.

We recognize the constraints of our current fiscal environment; yet, investing in mental health and substance use prevention and treatment saves lives *and* money. Without access to appropriate treatment, people with mental illnesses are more likely to experience crises that lead them to utilize costly emergency room services: nearly 12 million visits made to U.S. hospital emergency departments involve people with a mental illness, substance use disorder, or both.² People with untreated mental illnesses are also 4-6 times more likely to be incarcerated³ – with the average yearly cost of imprisoning an inmate at \$25,000, far more than the cost of community treatment.⁴ Illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco cost society \$610 billion per year.⁵ The recommendations made in both this letter and the accompanying chart are done with the understanding that these programs not be funded at the expense of another. To fully support the mental health and substance use treatment system, financial relief from the sequestration caps must be provided and must be done equitably amongst both non-defense discretionary and defense spending.

Additionally, we request your continued, bipartisan support for the State Targeted Response Grants as authorized by the 21st Century Cures Act of 2016. This law, passed with strong, bipartisan support, was the culmination of years of hard work and should be funded to its completion. The MHLG requests full funding of this authorization without decreasing funding available for other important priorities in the SAMHSA budget.

As you consider how best to appropriate federal funding for Fiscal Year 2018, we respectfully request that you incorporate the Mental Health Liaison Group's attached consensus recommendations into any appropriation or omnibus bill you introduce.

Sincerely,

*American Art Therapy Association
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
EMDR International Association
The Jewish Federations of North America
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
Illinois Association of Behavioral Health
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Board for Certified Counselors
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National League for Nursing
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association of America
The Trevor Project*

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (September 4, 2014). The NSDUH Report: Substance Use and Mental Health Estimates from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Overview of Findings. Rockville, MD. Accessed online at <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/NSDUH14-0904/NSDUH14-0904.pdf>

² Owens, Pamela L, Ph.D. et al. Mental Health & Substance Abuse-Related Emergency Department Visits among Adults, 2007. American Academy of Emergency Medicine. 2010;17(5):3-5.

³ Cox, J.F., Morschauer, P.C., Banks, S., & Stone, J.L. (2001). A Five-Year Population Study of Persons Involved in the Mental Health and Local Correctional Systems. Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research, 28, 177-87.

⁴ John Schmitt et al., The High Budgetary Cost of Incarceration 11 (2010), available at <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/incarceration-2010-06.pdf>.

⁵ House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies, Public Witness Hearing: Testimony of Robert I.L. Morrison, Executive Director, National Association of State and Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD). March 25, 2014.