

# Mental Health Liaison Group

May 15, 2015

The Honorable Jack Reed  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Reed and Murkowski:

The undersigned organizations are pleased to write in support of the legislation you recently introduced, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Reauthorization of 2015. As you know, this legislation renews the federal commitment to three critically important youth and college suicide prevention programs administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and ensures they are best designed to meet the needs of those they are intended to serve.

Since inception, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act (GLSMA) has supported 370 youth suicide prevention grants in 50 states, 46 tribes or tribal organizations, and 175 institutions of higher education. While much has been achieved thanks to the successful grants supported by the GLSMA, there remains much to do. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide remains the third-leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults between the ages of 10 and 24, and results in 4,600 lives lost each year. In a nationwide survey of youth in grades 9-12 in public and private schools in the United States (U.S.), the CDC found that 16% of students reported seriously considering suicide, 13% reported creating a plan, and 8% reporting trying to take their own life in the 12 months preceding the survey. In addition, the American College Health Association's most recent National College Health Assessment survey found that about one-third of U.S. college students had difficulty functioning in the last 12 months due to depression, and over half said they felt overwhelming anxiety in the last year.

As you know, the three critical programs supported by the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act has provided resources to communities and college campuses all across the country, and supported needed technical assistance to develop and disseminate effective strategies and best practices related to youth suicide prevention. Your legislation strengthens and supports existing Garrett Lee Smith programs. First, the State and Tribal Program fosters the creation of public-private collaborations and the development of critically needed prevention and early intervention strategies. Next, the Campus Suicide Prevention Program enhances services, outreach, and education for students with mental health or substance use disorders and calls for the development of best practice for the delivery of such services. Finally, the Suicide Prevention Resource Center provides information and training to States, Tribes, and tribal organizations, institutions of higher education, and public organizations or private non-profit groups in an effort to prevent suicide among all ages, particularly among high risk groups, such as youth.

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)

We are especially pleased that you have increased the authorization levels for these programs to match current federal spending. This measured increase acknowledges the important efforts that have come from the development of these programs as well as the significant work that remains to build suicide prevention capacity across the country.

Our organizations are grateful to you and your colleagues for your strong bipartisan approach regarding this program. We thank you for your support of this effort and demonstrating extraordinary leadership on youth suicide prevention. Your unwavering leadership and commitment to youth suicide prevention undoubtedly has important implications for the current and future health and wellbeing of our nation's youth. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to ensure that the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act is promptly reauthorized.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors  
American Association on Health and Disability\*  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action  
Mental Health America  
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors  
National Association of State Directors of Special Education  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery

National Council for Behavioral Health  
National Council on Problem Gambling  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America  
School Social Work Association of America  
The Trevor Project  
Tourette Syndrome Association  
Treatment Communities of America

*\* MHLG Observer*