

November 29, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Majority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-107, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer  
Minority Whip  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1705 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Whip Hoyer:

We, the undersigned organizations, write today in strong support of mental health reform provisions contained in the bicameral and bipartisan end-of-year healthcare package currently being advanced, and we urge the House to pass these provisions as soon as possible.

As you know, we have a mental health crisis in this country. Over 68 million Americans have experienced a mental health or substance use disorder in the past year, which is more than 20 percent of the total population of the United States. Lifetime rates are much higher with some estimates approaching 50 percent. More striking, in 2014, nearly 43,000 Americans died by suicide. Many individuals with mental health or substance use conditions are unable to access or receive the appropriate services and supports for these disorders, and they remain constantly challenged by mental health service delivery systems that are largely fragmented and uncoordinated across the country.

Thanks in large part to the tireless efforts of Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA), Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), and others, Congress has prioritized mental health reform efforts over the past three years. We are pleased that the underlying healthcare package incorporates H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, which passed the House nearly unanimously in July. These important bipartisan provisions strengthen federal coordination of mental health resources, increase reporting on mental health parity, advance integrated service delivery, support the mental health workforce, increase early access to mental health services, promote suicide prevention, and enact meaningful reforms to criminal justice systems.

The need for reform is urgent, and you have the opportunity to act now to improve the lives of tens of millions of Americans, their families, and our communities.

We urge you to enact mental health reform legislation this year.

Sincerely,

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Eating Disorders Coalition  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
Sandy Hook Promise