

March 16, 2018

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 mental health and addiction prevention and treatment priorities in the upcoming FY2018 omnibus spending package. 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.

As you continue your work to finalize a FY2018 budget, we ask that you remember that investing in mental health and substance use prevention and treatment saves lives *and* money. Far too many Americans living with a mental health or substance use disorder are unable to access needed treatment. Each day, an average of 174 Americans die from an opioid overdose. Each year, nearly 45,000 Americans die by suicide. Without access to appropriate treatment, people with mental illnesses and addiction 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.ⁱ Of the more than 23 million Americans with a drug or alcohol use disorder, only 2.5 million received treatment for their condition in 2013 – that’s a mere 11 percent.ⁱⁱ

We appreciate Congress coming together last month on a budget agreement to include funding to address these issues. The budget deal – and subsequent addition of \$6 billion in spending for opioid addiction and mental health treatment – reflects that. It is the hope of the undersigned that this agreement will allow for increases to the life-saving government programs currently authorized and/or funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. By continuing to invest in and expand our nation’s mental health and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery programs, Congress can help create healthier communities to ensure that all Americans can access the treatment they need, when they need it.

Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to the mental health and addictions treatment community. As you consider how best to appropriate federal funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2018, please rely on the Mental Health Liaison Group as a resource for you and your staff.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Center for Clinical Social Work
Clinical Social Work Association
College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice
International Certification & Reciprocity Consortium
The Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association for Rural Mental 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 Health Care for the Homeless Council
National League for Nursing
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium
Sandy Hook Promise
School Social Work Association
Young Invincibles

ⁱ 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.

ⁱⁱ 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>