

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2017

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labor HHS-Education and Related Agencies
Subcommittee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labor HHS-Education and Related Agencies
Subcommittee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro—

We achieved a great accomplishment in December of 2016 when, after months of collaborative effort, the bipartisan Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act was signed into law as part of the 21st Century Cures Act. But that was just the beginning. Now it is time to translate our words into action and deliver the promises we made to America. We must see our commitment to families in mental health crisis through, fund the programs which have been authorized, and ensure that we can finally provide treatment before tragedy.

We are in the midst of a mental health crisis in America. One in five Americans will experience mental illness this year. While 10 million adults suffer from a serious mental illness (SMI), nearly 40% do not receive treatment. A critical shortage of qualified providers, dearth of crisis psychiatric beds, failed mental health parity implementation, and the appalling absence of strong federal leadership leave too many Americans to suffer in the shadows.

Treatment delayed is treatment denied –waiting to fund this law will contribute to more crime, violence, homelessness, and the daily loss of 959 Americans as a result of a mental illness. The level of this crisis was learned during the 4 year long House investigation, the major findings of which are listed below.

Critical Shortage of Qualified Providers

- There are 9,000 Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists for 17 million children with a mental health condition, but there is an need for 30,000;
- African Americans are half as likely to receive psychiatric treatment;
- For Hispanics with a mental disorder, fewer than 1 in 11 see a mental health specialist;
- 55% of counties do not have a practicing psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker;
- 72% of states have a shortage of psychiatric nurses;
- Over the last decade the total number of physicians has increased by 45% but the number of psychiatrists has only increased 12%;
- The average time between onset of first symptoms of psychosis and first treatment is 80 weeks.

Dearth of Psychiatric Crisis Beds

- There is a nation-wide shortage of 100,000 crisis psychiatric beds;
- In 1955 there were 550,000 psychiatric beds, but today there are only 40,000;
- Only one state (Mississippi) has enough beds to meet the minimum standard;

- When patients are in crisis they are often diverted to jails, boarded in Emergency Rooms, or released without treatment.

Parity

- It has been nearly a decade since parity became law, yet there is no oversight, monitoring or enforcement;
- Americans with eating disorders still cannot get coverage of their treatment.

Failed Federal Leadership

- In the area of mental health, the federal government spends \$130 billion annually by 112 agencies across 8 separate departments;
- In a stunning and groundbreaking report the GAO exposed that federal mental health programs have nearly no coordination, few evaluations, and four out of five do not require evidence-based practices;
- 55% of Medicaid funding goes to 5% of the Medicaid population and nearly all of those patients has a mental health condition.

Violence

- While individuals with a mental health condition are NOT more violent than the general public, those with untreated psychosis are 15 times more likely to be violent when not in treatment;
- 80 percent of violent acts committed by those with untreated psychosis are attributable directly to their illness.

Criminal Justice

- Of those Americans in local jails 64% have mental illness, 56% in state prison, and 45% in federal prison;
- Mentally ill inmates cost taxpayers three-times more than those without a mental illness;
- Incarcerating someone with a mental illness is 20 times more expensive than community treatment;
- Over 70% of people in jails with serious mental illness also have a substance use disorder;
- Individuals with a mental illness are 4 to 6 times more likely to be the victim of sexual violence.

Homelessness and Poverty

- Over one-third of Americans experiencing homelessness have a serious mental illness;
- People with serious mental illness are three-times more likely to be in poverty.

Preventable Deaths

- Having a serious mental illness is worse for someone's health than chronic heavy smoking;
- Those with a serious mental illness die 10-25 years prematurely;
- There are 43,000 suicides, and 90% of those suicides have mental illness as a contributing factor;
- 350,000 Americans die each year as a direct or indirect result of a mental illness.

Given the urgency of the mental health crisis in America, we write with the vital request that your subcommittee take up and pass a bill that fully funds the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act. Fixing our nation's mental health system must be our priority; we know that every day more than 900 lives are lost in our nation due – directly or indirectly – to mental health. At a time when some many lives are on the line, delays and politics cannot overrule compassion and common sense. We respectfully ask you to fund the following provisions of the law to provide treatment before tragedy.

Sec. 7001. Encouraging Innovation and Evidence-Based Programs

\$14 million to establish the National Mental Health and Substance Use Policy Laboratory (NMHSUPL), which will promote evidence-based practices and service delivery models through evaluating models that would benefit from further development and through expanding, replicating, or scaling evidence-based programs across a wider area.

Sec. 7003. Priority Mental Health Needs of Regional and National Significance

\$394,550,000 for the Priority Mental Health Needs of Regional and National Significance Program to support prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of mental health services and other programs to target responses based on mental health needs.

Sec. 7004. Substance Use Disorder Treatment Needs of Regional and National Significance

\$333,806,000 for the Priority Substance Use Disorder Treatment Needs of Regional and National Significance Program to improve the quality and availability of treatment and rehabilitation services for substance use disorder services in targeted areas.

Sec. 7005. Priority Substance Use Disorder Prevention Needs of Regional and National Significance

\$211,148,000 for the Priority Mental Health Needs of Regional and National Significance Program to support projects and programs for prevention of substance use and other programs to target responses based on health needs.

Sec. 8001. Community Mental Health Services Block Grant

\$532,571,000 for the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) block grant funding to provide community mental health services for adults with SMI and children with SED.

Sec. 8002. Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant

\$1,858,079,000 billion for the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant for training for substance use disorder prevention and treatment professionals on recent trends in drug abuse in the state, evidence-based practices for substance use disorder services, performance-based accountability, and data collection and reporting requirements.

Sec. 9001. Grants for Treatment and Recovery for Homeless Individuals

\$41,304,000 for grants for treatment and recovery for homeless individuals to support mental health and substance use disorder services.

Sec. 9002. Grants for Jail Diversion Programs

\$4,269,000 for the development and implementation of programs to divert individuals with a mental illness from the criminal justice system to community-based services.

Sec. 9003. Promoting Integration of Primary and Behavioral Health Care

\$51,878,000 for grants to support integrated care models for primary care and behavioral health care services.

Sec. 9004. Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

\$64,635,000 for grants for states to provide services to homeless individuals who are suffering from serious mental illness, or co-occurring serious mental illness and substance use disorders.

Sec. 9005. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Program

7,198,000 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline program.

Sec. 9007. Strengthening Community Crisis Response Systems

\$12.5 million for grants to state and local governments, Indian tribes, and tribal organizations to strengthen community-based crisis response systems or to develop, maintain, or enhance a database of beds at inpatient psychiatric facilities, crisis stabilization units, and residential community mental health and residential substance use disorder treatment facilities.

Sec. 9008. Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Reauthorization

\$5,988,000 for suicide prevention technical assistance center to provide information and training for suicide prevention, surveillance, and intervention strategies for all ages, particularly among groups at high risk.

\$30 million for the Youth Suicide Early Intervention and Prevention Strategies grants to states and tribes, and clarifies that states may receive continuation grants after the first grant is awarded.

Sec. 9009. Adult Suicide Prevention

\$30 million for suicide prevention and intervention programs grants for individuals aged 25 years or older that raise awareness of suicide, establish referral processes, and improve care and outcomes for such individuals who are at risk of suicide.

Sec. 9010. Mental Health Awareness Training Grants

\$14,963,000 for grants to states, political subdivisions of states, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and nonprofit private entities to train teachers, appropriate school personnel, emergency services personnel, and others, as appropriate, to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, to become familiar with resources in the community for individuals with mental illnesses, and for the purpose of the safe de-escalation of crisis situations involving individuals with mental illness.

Sec. 9014. Assisted Outpatient Treatment

\$20 million for a grant program for Assisted Outpatient Treatment.

Sec. 9015. Assertive Community Treatment

\$5 million for a grant program establish, maintain, or expand assertive community treatment programs for adults with SMI.

Sec. 9016 Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Reauthorization

\$1 million for the Interagency Coordinating Committee.

\$1 million for the National Media Campaign to Prevent Underage Drinking.

\$5 million for the Community- Based Coalition Enhancement grants.

\$3 million for funding additional research on underage drinking.

Sec. 9021. Mental and Behavioral Health Education Training Grants

\$50 million for grants to institutions of higher education or accredited professional training programs to support the recruitment and education of mental health care providers.

Sec. 9022. Strengthening the Mental and Substance Use Disorders Workforce

\$10 million to establish a training demonstration program within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to award five-year minimum grants for medical residents and fellows to practice psychiatry and addiction medicine in underserved, community-based settings; nurse practitioners, physician assistants, health service psychologists, and social workers to provide mental and substance use disorder services in underserved community-based settings; and establishing, maintaining, or improving academic programs that provide training to improve the ability to recognize, diagnose, and treat mental and substance use disorders.

Sec. 9024. Minority Fellowship Program

\$12,669,000 for the Minority Fellowship Program for the Secretary to increase the number of professionals who provide mental or substance use disorder services to underserved, minority populations, and to improve the quality of mental and substance use disorder prevention and treatment for ethnic minorities.

Sec. 9031. Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services on Campus

\$7 million for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services on Campuses grant program and allows for the education of students, families, faculty, and staff to increase awareness and training to respond effectively to students with mental health and substance use disorders, to provide outreach to administer voluntary screenings and assessments to students, to enhance networks with health care providers who treat mental health and substance use disorders, and to provide direct mental health services. Incorporates consideration of the needs of veterans enrolled as students on campus

Sec. 9032. Interagency Working Group on College Mental Health

\$1 million for an interagency working group to discuss mental and behavioral health on college campuses and to promote federal agency collaboration to support innovations in mental health services and supports for students on college and university campuses.

Sec. 9033. Mental and Behavioral Health Outreach and Education on College Campuses

\$1 million for collaboration with the CDC to convene an interagency, public-private sector work group to plan, establish, and begin coordinating and evaluating a targeted, public-education campaign to focus on mental and behavioral health on the campuses of institutions of higher education.

Sec. 10001. Programs for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances

\$119,026,000 for programs to provide comprehensive community mental health services to children with SED.

Sec. 10002. Increasing Access to Pediatric Mental Health Care

\$9 million for HRSA to award grants to promote behavioral health integration in pediatric primary care.

Sec. 10003. Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Early Intervention Services for Children and Adolescents

\$29.6 million for substance use disorder treatment and early intervention for children and adolescents to provide early identification and services.

Sec. 10004. Children's Recovery from Trauma

\$46.9 million for the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI), which supports a national network of child trauma centers, including university, hospital, and community-based centers and affiliate members.

Sec. 10005. Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression

\$5 million for screening assessment and treatment services for women who are pregnant, or who have given birth within the preceding 12 months, for maternal depression.

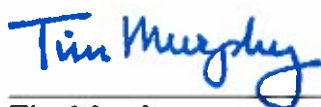
Sec. 10006. Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Promotion, Intervention, and Treatment

\$20 million for grant programs to develop, maintain, or enhance mental health prevention, intervention, and treatment programs for infants and children at significant risk of developing or showing early signs of mental disorders, including SED, or social or emotional disability.

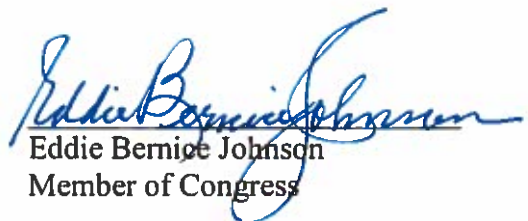
Sec. 11004. Development and Dissemination of Model Training Programs

\$10 million for the Secretary to identify or recognize private or public entities to develop model training and educational programs to educate health care providers, regulatory compliance staff, and others regarding the permitted use and disclosure of health information under HIPAA.

We thank the committee for consideration on this important issue.



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



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