



National Association for Rural Mental Health

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March 18, 2016

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2183 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Minority Member
House Energy & Commerce Committee
237 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Replacing HR 2646 *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act* with the *Senate Mental Health Reform Act of 2016*

Dear Chairman Upton and Representative Pallone:

The National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors represents more than 750 county mental health, substance use, and developmental disability directors and their programs throughout the US. These programs serve as the behavioral health safety net for more than 75% of the US population.

We write today in continued strong opposition to the current proposed HR 2646, the *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act*. Our areas of greatest concern are as follows:

SAMHSA: We oppose the dismemberment of SAMHSA and the creation of a new office of an Assistant Secretary of Health to oversee SAMHSA programs. These actions would be very destructive to the progress that has been made in the field to introduce trauma-informed care and the critical goal of recovery. We do support the continuation of SAMHSA as one of the agencies of HHS reporting directly to the Secretary, and we support the creation of a White House Office of Mental Health Policy.


AOT: We oppose the subterfuge in this Bill around the requirement for mandatory Assisted Outpatient Treatment. We support the further development of advance directives, medical powers of attorney, and other means of conveying personal choice in one's care.

P&A Program: We oppose the dismemberment of the SAMHSA Protection and Advocacy Program. and we do support its continuation in its current form.

A Clear Path Forward. Now, a clear path forward has emerged. On Wednesday, under the leadership of Senators Alexander and Murray, the Senate HELP Committee sent to the Senate floor the *Mental Health Reform Act of 2016*. This bipartisan effort overcomes virtually all of the remaining problems of HR 2646. We strongly urge you to adopt the Senate Bill as a framework for moving forward.

Chairman Upton, we continue to applaud your effort to find a consensus position. Ranking Member Pallone, we applaud your essential efforts to represent the views of all Americans who suffer from mental illness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Manderscheid". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronald W. Manderscheid, PhD
Executive Director
NACBHDD and NARMH