

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 24, 2017

Senator Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-Health and
Human Services-Education
135 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-Health and
Human Services-Education
156 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to respectfully request robust funding for the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016. Last December, Congress made mental health and substance use disorders an important, bipartisan issue by passing this significant legislation into law as part of the 21st Century Cures Act. Now is the time to capitalize on this momentum and fulfill the vision laid out in that bill by allocating sufficient resources to implement the law. Funding these vital grants and programs will begin to help millions of Americans who live with mental health and substance use disorders every day.

Approximately 44 million Americans experience a mental illness in a given year, and serious mental illness costs over \$193 billion in lost productivity each year. Mental illness impacts every facet of our society. Twenty percent of American teens aged 13 to 18 years live with a mental health condition, and a staggering fifty percent of youth with mental illness drop out of school. Seventy percent of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness. Furthermore, the overall national suicide rate increased by twenty-four percent from 1999 to 2014.

While so many Americans are living with mental illness and substance use disorders, they are struggling to find access to mental health care. There is a shortage of mental health providers across the nation. According to the Health Resources & Services Administration, 97 million Americans were living in areas with shortages of mental health providers in 2014. That number is an increase from around 91 million Americans living in mental health provider shortage areas in 2012.

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016 would help make strides towards improving our mental health system. Specifically, the law expands efforts to integrate physical and mental health, strengthens enforcement and transparency of mental health parity and promotes early intervention and telehealth psychiatry access for children. It also increases the mental health workforce and requires the administration to disseminate model training programs and materials for consumers, family members and providers on when it is appropriate to share protected health information. Lastly, the bill updated a number of existing programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, such as the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and grants on jail diversion, homelessness and suicide prevention. We must follow through by funding these programs to truly address the long-standing challenges in our mental health system and enact the change that was outlined in the Mental Health Reform Act.

Given the vast need for mental health resources and access to care for Americans of all ages, we strongly urge you to provide the resources necessary to implement the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016.

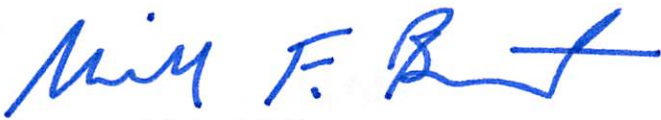


Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Bill Cassidy M.D.
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



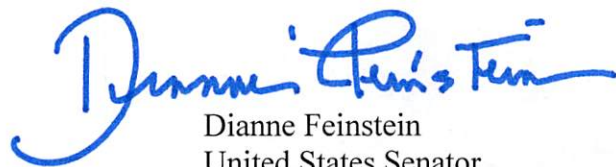
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator