



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

June 20, 2016

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA), the national leadership organization of more than 2,200 Catholic health care systems, hospitals, long-term care facilities, sponsors, and related organizations, I am writing to express our support for the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act (HR 2646) and to ask you to support this bipartisan legislation as well as efforts to bring it up for a vote before the full House as soon as possible.

As health care providers many of our members play a pivotal role in the delivery of mental and behavioral health services, and we have seen first-hand how harmful the gaps in the mental health system in our nation are to those we serve. Our Catholic health ministry is also primarily concerned with reaching out to the poor and most vulnerable, many of whom are in desperate need of readily accessible and high-quality mental and behavioral health services. Our advocacy agenda calls on Congress to support legislation to expand programs and funding for these services, especially those that are community-based, to ensure access to coordinated, holistic care. We believe HR 2646 takes significant steps towards that goal.

We commend this legislation's provisions to strengthen mental health parity; enhance grant programs for research and early intervention; improve crisis response services; and support the integration of mental health, substance use and primary care. We also are pleased that HR 2646 takes important steps toward providing better care for Medicaid beneficiaries by clarifying issues concerning same-day billing and codifying a regulation to allow certain enrollees receiving inpatient treatment for psychiatric or substance use disorder to be treated for up to 15 days per month. We do hope that, if not in this legislation, then as soon as possible Congress will take further action to ensure that Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries have access to full mental and behavioral health services.

The Catholic health ministry applauds the efforts of all those who have helped moved this important legislation forward, and we hope you will join us in supporting HR 2646 and asking House leaders to bring it up for a vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Carol Keehan".

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC
President and CEO