



A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care

September 13, 2016

Committee on Energy and Commerce
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 HR 1877, the Mental Health First Aid Act.

The Catholic health ministry has always maintained a priority of 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 also realize along with others involved in the provision of these services that those who are most at risk are often not treated due to the inability of so many to properly recognize and refer for care those who are suffering from mental and behavioral health disorders.

HR 1877 takes important steps toward addressing that problem by offering grants to states and nonprofit private entities among others to train key individuals to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness and defuse crisis situations; provide first aid; refer for timely mental health services; and enhance effective treatment. These grants would help to train first responders, police officers, teachers, school administrators and others. As faith-based health providers, we are pleased that the grants for training would be available for nurses and other primary care personnel as well as faith community leaders, so many of whom have had to grapple with these issues. We believe that the training provided by these grants also will help to increase public awareness of the needs in treating mental health disorders, decreasing the stigma associated with them and increasing access to care.

We hope you will join us in support of HR 1877.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Rodgers". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Michael Rodgers
Senior Vice President
Public Policy and Advocacy