



*A Passionate Voice for Compassionate Care*

December 9, 2015

U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC

Dear Senator:

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 Mental Health Reform Act of 2015 (S. 1945) and to ask you, if you have not already done so, to co-sponsor this bipartisan legislation.

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 S. 1945 takes significant steps towards that goal.

Specifically, we are pleased that this legislation contains provisions to improve mental health services and ensure parity within the Medicaid and Medicare programs, by enacting critical reforms to allow for same-day and same-location mental health and primary care services and to repeal the current Medicaid exclusion on inpatient psychiatric care for certain individuals. We also commend the legislation's provisions to strengthen mental health parity; establish new grant programs for research and early intervention; establish a national mental health policy laboratory; and provide incentives to states to help integrate mental and physical health services.

The Catholic health ministry applauds the efforts of Senators Bill Cassidy and Chris Murphy to address the vital issue of mental health reform by introducing S. 1945, and we urge you to join with us in support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

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

Sr. Carol Keehan, DC  
President and CEO