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May 6, 2014

The Honorable Ron Barber  
1029 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Barber:

On behalf of The Trevor Project, the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 24, we write in strong support of the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act of 2014, a community mental health solution that puts patients at the center of their care and recognizes the absolute importance of family and community support systems.

This landmark legislation will strengthen important SAMSHA programs such as the community mental health services block grants, projects to assist in the transition from homelessness, and protection and advocacy programs for individuals with mental illness. We also very much support the reauthorization of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, a vital source of funding and technical assistance for youth suicide prevention efforts. We appreciate the recognition in this bill of SAMHSA's necessary role at the heart of all of these programs.

This comprehensive bill goes a long way towards crafting a whole-system approach to supporting good mental health and wellbeing. We support the establishment of the White House Office of Mental Health Policy and believe such an important and cross-sector issue is best addressed through executive coordination and strategy. We also want to thank you for your focus on children and youth, and on the important role that school-based mental health professionals play in ensuring the health and wellbeing of our nation's young people

As you know, suicide is closely associated with mental illness; more than 90 percent of those who die by suicide have a diagnosable mental disorder. Among young people ages 10 to 24, suicide is the second leading cause of death. This issue is especially critical for LGBTQ youth populations. Research has shown that LGB youth are 4 times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers, and questioning youth are 3 times more likely.

While these statistics are tragic, this vital legislation will help make a difference for our nation's most vulnerable young people. We are grateful for your commitment to suicide prevention efforts in the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act of 2014. The incorporation of the SPRINT Act, the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act Reauthorization, and the expansion of the National Violent Death Reporting System, will all significantly aid our work to prevent youth suicide.

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Abbe Land

Executive Director & CEO

Thank you again for your dedication to the safety of young people and your leadership on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abbe Land', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Abbe Land  
Executive Director & CEO