

American Psychiatric Association

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May 15, 2014

The Honorable Ron Barber
United States House of Representatives
1029 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Barber,

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the medical specialty society representing more than 35,000 psychiatric physicians and their patients, we thank you for introducing a comprehensive legislative package that seeks reforms to a broken mental health and substance use system being integrated into a national public health care system.

Over 60 million Americans live with a diagnosable psychiatric or substance use disorder, and 13 million Americans live with a serious or severe psychiatric disorder. Our country is at a historic crossroads in its treatment of individuals with serious mental illnesses and its ability to deal with the personal, economic, and moral consequences of untreated psychiatric disorders. Your Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act contains several reforms that are important to improving this untenable situation.

Thank you for including legislation supported by APA such as the Behavioral Health IT Extension Act, the Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act, the Native American Psychiatric and Mental Health Improvement Act, the Ensuring Veterans Resiliency Act, reauthorization of the pediatric subspecialty loan forgiveness program, and provisions related to implementation and enforcement of the bipartisan Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act.

As you are aware, comprehensive mental health legislation (H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act) has been introduced by Representative Tim Murphy (R-PA) that emphasizes the provision of evidence-based psychiatric services and research supports. It is APA's hope that lawmakers in both parties, in collaboration with the mental health advocacy community, can move forward with bipartisan expansive mental health legislation that significantly and positively reforms our nation's severely flawed mental health system.

The leadership of the APA looks forward to working with you to better our patients' access to needed psychiatric services and increased funding for research.

Sincerely,



Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A.
CEO and Medical Director

