



July 7, 2014

The Honorable Tim Murphy
United States House of Representatives
2332 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-3818

Dear Representative Murphy,

On behalf of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine (AAEM) I am writing to express our support for the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013. AAEM is the specialty society of board certified emergency medicine physicians. Your legislation highlights a very important issue — the need to mend our nation's fragmented mental health system and improve the availability of psychiatric, psychological and supportive services for individuals with mental illness and families in mental health crisis.

As emergency medicine physicians, we understand the importance of continuous and sustained mental health care for patients with psychiatric illnesses. Increased federal funding of regulated outpatient psychiatric facilities, protection of specific psychiatric drugs and the capacity for physicians to share crucial information to caregivers about loved ones enduring acute mental health crisis will directly and indirectly affect emergency medical care. This legislation positively contributes to patient treatment compliance and, in turn, averts relapse, hospitalizations and destructive behavior. Addressing these issues decreases the burden on our emergency care system.

In addition, your bill addresses the liability of physician volunteers and health care professionals. AAEM applauds this practical, common sense provision that provides important liability protections for physicians that want to be part of the solution. More broadly, AAEM supports legislation that addresses tort reform and seeks to fix our broken medical liability reform system. The Academy looks forward to engaging in discussions with you and your staff concerning medical liability reform in the future.

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013 would be an important step in the right direction for individuals in our country suffering from mental illness. As our health care system goes through a metamorphosis, it is important that we address the issues surrounding psychiatric illness and its impact on our emergency care system. Thank you for sponsoring legislation that would provide enhanced mental health resources for our patients with mental health and substance abuse issues. We look forward to working with you and your staff on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Mark Reiter, MD MBA FAAEM
President

American Academy of Emergency Medicine

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