

April 9, 2014

The Honorable Tim Murphy  
SH-133  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Murphy:

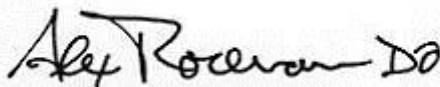
On behalf of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and our 33,000 members, I am writing to express ACEP's support for H.R. 3717, the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013," and to thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

For years, state support for mental health resources has been on the decline and services for psychiatric patients in the United States are simply inadequate. As a result of this diminishing support, psychiatric patients are more and more often turning to emergency departments for their acute care needs. Unfortunately, it takes three times as long to find an inpatient bed for a psychiatric patient rather than a medical patient after the decision to admit has been made. These psychiatric patients require more physician, nurse and hospital resources than other patients and, thus, diminish our ability to evaluate and treat other medical patients who are awaiting emergency care services.

Your legislation will improve research, data collection and efficacy of existing mental health programs; promote evidence-based medicine to create systems of care for patients with mental illness; and help train emergency medical and law enforcement personnel to recognize individuals with mental health issues and how to intervene. Additionally, H.R. 3717 will remove regulations that currently prohibit the same-day billing under Medicaid for treatment of physical and mental health for the same patient, in the same location, on the same day; ameliorate the Medicaid Institutes for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion by giving states the option to receive federal matching payments for care of adult patients with mental illness; and establish federal liability protections for health professionals who volunteer at community health centers or behavioral health centers.

The prevalence of mental illness in this country, combined with a lack of resources to care for these individuals in the most appropriate setting, is a national crisis. Systemic changes are needed in the way individuals with mental illness are care for in this country. H.R. 3717 would help ensure resources are made available to conduct vitally needed research on this issue and to fund additional inpatient and outpatient treatment beds with the corresponding professional staff. Most importantly, your bill would help many of these patients from reaching a crisis point, requiring acute emergency department services, in the first place.

Sincerely,



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President, ACEP

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