



# AMERICAN COLLEGE OF LEGAL MEDICINE, INC.

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The Honorable Tim Murphy

Chairman, Oversight & Investigation Subcommittee

United States House of Representatives

2125 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Murphy,

The American College of Legal Medicine (ACLM) is a national not-for-profit organization composed primarily of physician-attorneys. Thus, our organization is uniquely qualified to weigh the risks and benefits of proposed legislation that impacts healthcare. After weighing the evidence, the ACLM endorses the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act" (H.R. 3717) and encourages the Congress to enact this legislation.

Ideally, but perhaps unrealistically, the ACLM would like to have a pure market based solution for improving the care of the mentally ill. The ACLM is also not unaware of the potential slippery slope that is inherent in any system that utilizes substituted judgment for the mental impaired.

Still, the College is favorably impressed with a number of provisions in H.R. 3717, which would:

- Create exemptions to HIPAA and FERPA that would facilitate loved one's access to the records of the mentally impaired so that they can better provide needed care
- Returns the Protection and Advocacy for individuals with Mental Illness to its original focus of improving care of the most seriously mentally ill
- Funding:
  - » Telepsychiatry in rural areas (thereby improving access to care)
  - » Mental health courts (thereby allowing appropriately selected individuals with mental illness to receive treatment rather than jail time)
  - » Pilot outpatient treatment programs
- Create an HHS undersecretary position to provide needed oversight of the program

The ACLM found that on balance the proposed Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act will improve mental healthcare and therefore be a benefit to all of society. Accordingly, the ACLM supports H.R. 3717, encourages all of American society to support the bill, and encourages the Congress to enact the bill.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. McLean, MD, JD, FCLM, ESQ

President-Elect & Acting President

American College of Legal Medicine