

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2018

Senator Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Labor-Health and
Human Services-Education
135 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-Health and
Human Services-Education
156 Senate Dirksen Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We write to respectfully request robust funding for the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016. In December 2016, Congress made mental health and substance use disorders an important, bipartisan issue by passing this significant legislation into law as part of the 21st Century Cures Act. Through your leadership, Congress built on that success by increasing funding for many mental health and substance use disorder programs within the recent Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. Continuing funding for those programs and the others that were authorized will fulfill the vision laid out in the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016.

Approximately 44 million Americans experience a mental illness in a given year, and serious mental illness costs over \$193 billion in lost productivity each year. Mental illness impacts every facet of our society. Twenty percent of American teens aged 13 to 18 years live with a mental health condition, and students with mental health conditions have the highest dropout rate of any disability group.. Seventy percent of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness. Furthermore, the overall national suicide rate increased by twenty-four percent from 1999 to 2014.

While so many Americans are living with mental illness and substance use disorders, they are struggling to find access to mental health care. There is a shortage of mental health providers across the nation. According to the Health Resources & Services Administration, 123 million Americans were living in areas with shortages of mental health providers in 2017. That number is an increase from around 91 million Americans living in mental health provider shortage areas just five years ago.

The primary goal of the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016 was to improve our mental health system and make it more responsive to the needs of those with mental illness. Specifically, the law expanded efforts to integrate physical and mental health, strengthened enforcement and transparency of mental health parity and promoted early intervention and telehealth psychiatry access for children. It also increased the mental health workforce and required the administration to disseminate model training programs and materials for consumers, family members and providers on when it is appropriate to share protected health information. Lastly, the bill updated a number of existing programs at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, such as the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and grants on jail diversion, homelessness and suicide prevention. We must follow through

by funding these programs to truly address the long-standing challenges in our mental health system and enact the change that was outlined in the Mental Health Reform Act.

Given the vast need for mental health resources and access to care for Americans of all ages, we strongly urge you to provide the resources necessary to implement the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016.


Sincerely,



Christopher Murphy
United States Senator



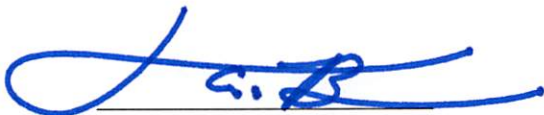
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United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



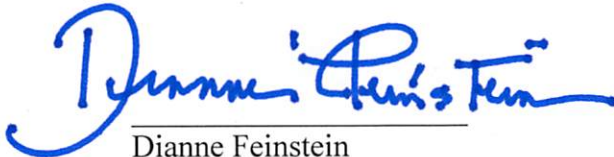
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United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



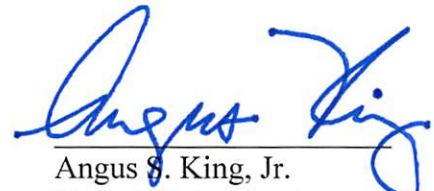
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