

July 24, 2015

The Honorable Tim Murphy, Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee
2125 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murphy:

On behalf of the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), I am writing to thank you for your leadership in addressing the ongoing mental health challenges our country faces, both through the years-long series of subcommittee hearings and the introduction of H.R. HR 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act.

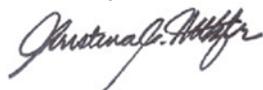
AOTA is the national professional association representing the interests of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students of occupational therapy. The practice of occupational therapy is science-driven, evidence-based, and includes the provision of mental health services to increase an individual's ability to live as independently as possible while engaging in meaningful and productive life roles.

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act promotes a coordinated and multi-systemic approach to dealing with mental illness in our country. Untreated or poorly managed mental illness - including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major clinical depression – robs many of our citizens of their ability to live healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives and leads to wide array of societal problems from chronic homelessness and reliance on hospital emergency departments to provide mental health services, to the re-institutionalization of the mentally ill in nursing facilities and the nation's jails and prisons.

AOTA was particularly pleased that the legislation highlights the importance of training the future mental health workforce as too many Americans still do not have access to the appropriate mental health provider. Earlier this year, Rep. Kelly and Rep. Tonko introduced the bipartisan Occupational Therapy in Mental Health Act (HR 1761) that would make OTs eligible for National Health Services Corps loan assistance as mental and behavioral health professionals.

The challenges our country faces in addressing the issue of mental illness are not easy ones. Again, we thank you for your leadership on mental health policy and for bringing forward HR 2646 in the House of Representatives. AOTA is committed to working with you and the Energy and Commerce Committee to ensure swift and appropriate Congressional action on these critical issues.

Sincerely,



Christina Metzler
Chief Public Affairs Officer

