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The Honorable Tim Murphy
United States House of Representatives
2332 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Murphy:

I am writing to commend you for your strong leadership on mental health issues in Congress and for taking the important step of crafting the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013. As the Chair of the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry, I share your hope that introducing this reform legislation will begin a serious conversation about mental health care in our nation; a conversation that has been avoided at our own peril for far too long.

I believe this legislation draws much needed and appropriate attention to the substantial burdens of providing effective care to individuals with psychiatric and addictive disorders. The limited capacity of our current mental health system allows many Americans suffering from illness to go undiagnosed or inadequately treated for years, often resulting in homelessness and incarceration. Another major barrier to proper diagnosis and treatment of mental illness is the significant stigma surrounding these disorders.

To address these challenges, your legislation places important emphasis on the need for enhancing access to evidence-based psychiatric and substance abuse services, as well as the integration of those services with other health care delivery systems. Individuals with mental illness often experience other health challenges, so incentivizing collaboration between primary care and mental health providers will have beneficial effects.

I also strongly endorse the promotion of a robust and sustained research agenda focused on serious mental illness as called for by the legislation. Potential discoveries made through increased funding at agencies like the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) hold the key to unlocking the mysteries of the brain and the causes of mental illness. Moreover, increased funding will facilitate research that is essential for improved diagnosis and treatment, and ultimately prevention and cure of these costly illnesses.

Once again, thank you for continuing the important dialogue on mental healthcare reform by introducing this legislation. The findings of your Subcommittee's investigation, as reflected in the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013, deserve the serious consideration and attention of your colleagues in Congress. I look forward to working with you to advance the provisions described in this letter and improving the health care system for all Americans suffering from serious mental illness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

David A. Lewis, MD