

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 22, 2015

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Education and Commerce Committee
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Pallone,

Once again our nation has been struck by gun violence. When mass shooters strike there seems to always be a severe mental health issue associated with the criminal engaging in such horrific acts. In fact, research has found that there is a direct link between serious mental illness and violence. By making mental health treatment a priority in America, we can better address these mass shooting situations by preventing them beforehand.

In addition, there are nearly 10 million Americans who are suffering from severe mental illness, but millions are going without treatment, all because our mental health system is in crisis. H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015, seeks to solve this problem, and we strongly encourage the Committee to markup this important legislation

50 percent of people will develop at least one mental health condition during their lifetime and half of those people will develop a mental health condition by age 14. Unfortunately, it takes about 10 years for people to get the treatment they need. The delay is caused by a shortage of psychiatric hospital beds, a lack of outpatient treatment options and mental health professionals, and significant barriers facing families with a loved one who has a mental illness. In a developed nation like the United States, this wait time is unacceptable.

Research has proven that the right early treatment for mental health conditions can change lives. It can reduce high school dropout rates, hospitalization, incarceration, and unemployment. It is for this reason we encourage the Committee to consider a markup of H.R.2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015 introduced by Congressman Tim Murphy and Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson.

This bill seeks to solve the mental health crisis we are currently facing in our country. It is a critical step toward treating mental illnesses like we treat every other chronic disease. The legislation increases access to behavioral health care for children; improves the quality of care at community mental health centers; focuses federal spending on evidence-based programs and treatments that work; and opens up the door to communication between doctors and parents and legal guardians of those with mental illness. The bill drives additional research at the National Institute of Mental Health, and increases the number of psychiatric hospital beds that we desperately need.

It is only fair that we care for those suffering from mental illnesses. We hope the Committee understands the importance of addressing this issue, and we strongly encourage the markup of H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015.

Sincerely,



Tom Reed
Member of Congress



Charles Rangel
Member of Congress



Kristi Noem
Member of Congress



Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



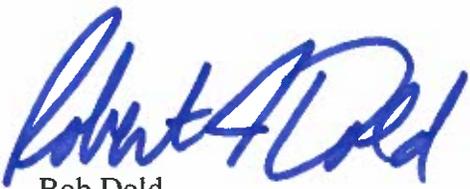
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Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Charles Boustany, Jr., M.D.
Member of Congress



Bob Dold
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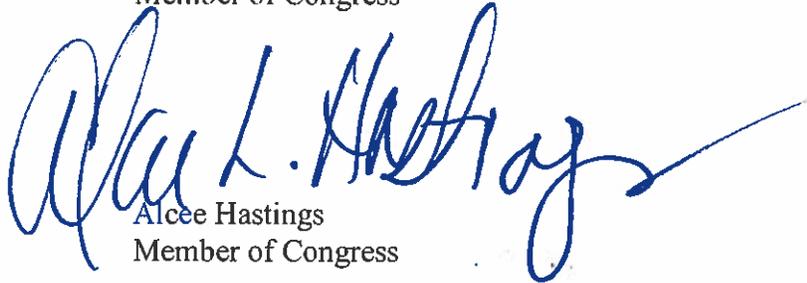
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Mike Coffman
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Alcee Hastings
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Earl Blumenauer
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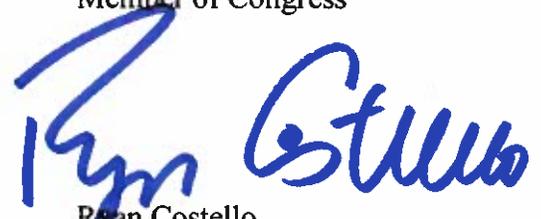
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Member of Congress



David Rouzer
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Ryan Costello
Member of Congress



Martha McSally
Member of Congress



David Reichert
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