MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF ESSEX COUNTY, INC.

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January 6, 2014

The Honorable Tim Murphy, Chairman
Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Murphy,

On behalf of the Mental Health Association of Essex County, Inc. (MHAEC), a community-based mental health agency serving over 5000 people a year, I write to applaud your leadership, as Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Oversight Subcommittee, in undertaking a review of the mental health system, and for your dedication to crafting the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013, legislation to improve the service delivery system for providers, patients, and families.

MHAEC strongly supports a number of important provisions in your legislation, including:

- Improvements in community mental health services through support of integrated mental health and primary care treatment in Community Mental Health Centers;
- Progress in ending longstanding discrimination against people with mental illness by permitting federal Medicaid reimbursement of acute, inpatient psychiatric treatment;
- Reauthorization of the federal Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA), which provides resources to states, communities and tribal governments for jail diversion, law enforcement and first responder training, and other services to prevent unnecessary criminal justice involvement for youth and adults with serious mental illness;
- Revisions to the federal HIPAA and FERPA laws that will permit families and other caregivers to have access to vital information necessary to provide care and support;
- Inclusion of the bipartisan Excellence in Mental Health Act;
- Reauthorization of the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Act, providing resources to communities for suicide education, prevention and postvention;

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- Improved access to psychiatric medications in the Medicaid and Medicare programs;
- Enhanced federal coordination of mental health services through creation of a federal Interagency Council on Serious Mental Illness;
- Increased resources for research through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), including research on early identification of serious mental illness in youth;
- Authorization for a campaign to address the stigma associated with mental illness;
- Reauthorization of federal programs focused on mental health services for children and youth;
- Provisions to expand Health Information Technology (HIT) resources for providers of mental health services;

Again, thank you for your outstanding leadership on mental health and substance use policy issues in the U.S. Congress.

Sincerely,

Robert N. Davison, M.A., L.P.C.
Executive Director