



NAMI Ohio

National Alliance on Mental Illness

The State's Voice on Mental Illness

1225 Dublin Road, Suite 125 • Columbus, Ohio 43215

January 13, 2014

The Honorable Rob Portman
448 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Portman,

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Ohio (NAMI Ohio), I am writing to urge your support for H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act to improve mental health services in the United States, sponsored by Representative Tim Murphy.

NAMI Ohio provides voice to Ohio's children and adults living with mental illness and their families. NAMI Ohio and our 50 affiliates throughout the state are engaged in education, support and advocacy on behalf of people living with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and other mental illnesses.

Daily, our members are negatively impacted by the gaps in our public mental health system. As you may know, fewer than 50% of all adults who live with serious mental illness have access to any mental health services at all. Access to mental health services is even worse for children, adolescents and young people between the ages of 16 and 24. The sad reality is that most people living with serious mental illness do not have access to services until their symptoms worsen to the point of constituting an emergency. This would not be acceptable for heart disease, cancer or any other medical illness and it should not be acceptable for serious mental illness either.

NAMI Ohio strongly supports a number of important provisions in the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act (HR 3717), 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



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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 a demonstration program based on 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;
- 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; and
- Provisions to expand Health Information Technology (HIT) resources for providers of mental health services.

Again, NAMI Ohio asks that you lend your support for H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, in order to achieve a comprehensive, coordinated federal response to children, youth and adults living with serious mental illness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Spada". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Spada, President
Board of Directors

cc: Representative Tim Murphy