



July 17, 2015

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

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Murphy and Johnson:

On behalf of Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services, I am writing to express our strong support for the *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015, H.R. 2646*. As one of the largest free-standing behavioral health providers in the U.S., we applaud your diligent, bipartisan efforts to increase access to quality behavioral health care for patients nationwide.

H.R. 2646 will have a positive impact on Pine Rest and the patients and families we serve in Michigan and Iowa. We seek to provide our clients with exceptional care that changes lives, with measurable outcomes and value. By focusing programs and resources on patients and families most in need of services, H.R. 2646 will strengthen the ability of our highly-specialized clinicians and professionals to serve the needs of our communities through high-quality, outcome-driven practices.

As an innovator in our field, we are also encouraged by provisions in H.R. 2646 that address critical mental health workforce needs, integration of medical and mental health records, address critical mental health research, and integrate primary and behavioral health care.

Specifically, we stand in strong support of your efforts to fix the shortage of psychiatric inpatient beds. The proposed revision of the Medicaid Institutes for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion would significantly enhance our ability to serve our patients in need of immediate care. For too long, this archaic, fifty year-old regulation has constrained access, cost, and quality of services provided by mental health organizations, like Pine Rest, to Medicaid recipients.

We are greatly encouraged by the IMD provision in your legislation, as well as the proposed rule change published earlier this month by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS). Addressing the IMD exclusion would have robust benefits for both providers and patients, including improvements to existing services, reduced wait times for patients, increased competition in the marketplace, reduced emergency room boarding in communities with free-

standing psychiatric hospitals, and an increase in cost savings of Medicaid dollars both in terms of days of care and episodes of care.

We stand with you, as you continue your efforts to move this critical legislation forward. As you do so, we encourage you to consider clarifications to the IMD exclusion provision in H.R. 2646. To ensure the original intent of the legislation is implemented, we recommend the legislative language is made consistent throughout the provision to ensure behavioral health centers like Pine Rest that offer an array of services across their campuses that may extend beyond thirty days, are not excluded from this important reform.

Once more, thank you for your support of patients and families in desperate need of high-quality, effective, timely mental health services, and your steadfast commitment to reforming the nation's mental health system. We look forward to working with you to advance H.R. 2646 and stand ready to serve as a resource for you and your colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Eastburg" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Mark Eastburg
President and CEO
Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services