

## **Representatives Murphy and Johnson Introduce Bold Mental Health Reform Legislation**

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The Treatment Advocacy Center applauds Representatives Tim Murphy (R-PA) and Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) for their reintroduction of the landmark “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act.”

“Our mental health treatment system is broken and families have suffered long enough,” said John Snook, executive director of the Treatment Advocacy Center. “This bill gives families the tools necessary to help their loved ones with severe mental illness access the treatment they need to prevent tragedy and recover their lives.”

Among many important provisions, the reintroduced “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act” would reorganize the way the federal government funds mental health services by identifying and prioritizing programs that have a proven track record of success. The bill would also provide nearly five million dollars in funding to help states use assisted outpatient treatment (AOT), a lifesaving program for people who are too sick to maintain treatment themselves.

“The recognition of AOT in this legislation follows its inclusion into the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and the announcement by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs that AOT is an effective and evidence-based practice for reducing crime and violence.” Snook said. “It is now clear that implementing and using AOT has become a public-health priority.”

Other changes to the mental health system include adjustments to the HIPAA Privacy Rule so caretakers of the severely mentally ill can access information in times of crisis and provisions to expand access to inpatient psychiatric care in appropriate settings.

“This country’s inadequate mental health system needs a checkup,” the executive continued. “This bill will help the government better serve the people who are most likely to suffer the consequences of untreated severe mental illness.”

Congressman Tim Murphy was chosen in 2014 to receive the Treatment Advocacy Center’s highest honor, the Torrey Advocacy Commendation, in recognition of his courageous efforts to make treatment possible for more people with severe mental illness.

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