

Thank you Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro. In December 2016, after a long and hard fought battle, Congress passed the 21st Century Cures Act, which contained the Mental Health First Aid Act, one of my top priorities since coming to Congress in 2009. Today I ask that the funding level of \$14,963,000 be fully appropriated for FY2018.

Section 9010, reauthorizes grants to states, and municipalities, Indian tribes, and nonprofit groups to train teachers, and school personnel, emergency services personnel, and others, to recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, to become familiar with resources in the community for people with mental illnesses, and for the safe deescalation of crisis situations involving someone with a mental illness. I cannot overstate how important these grants are to our law enforcement and first responders. The first step to helping someone suffering with a mental illness get the help he or she needs is to be able to quickly spot the signs of that mental illness and know where to point that friend, colleague, neighbor, or family member. Section 9010 will help police, first responders, veterans' advocates, teachers, and others spot the signs and get people help they need it.

It authorized a grant program that has been included in appropriations bills in years past and enjoyed great support from Congress and the public. These important groups will get educated in spotting signs of mental illness in the people they work and live with so that they can get help to those people.

We hear about the state of our mental health system every day and the state of the VA dealing with injured veterans. We hear about police and first responders called to a scene where someone has become dangerous and they are not sure of the best way to respond. Section 9010

will help those people know instinctively how to respond so that the situations stay in control and the risk of harm to anyone is lessened.

The kinds of education programs that this legislation will provide funding for have been shown to be effective and efficient at teaching people the signs of mental illness and how to drop the stigma of that illness so that someone in need can get help. We need this funding more than ever and I am glad that we have decided to take action here today.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak in front of this Committee today and I ask that its stated funding level of \$14,963,000 be given to SAMHSA so that it may in turn help those who need this training the most.