

SENIOR DEMOCRATIC WHIP

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE
AND TECHNOLOGY
RANKING MEMBER

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER
RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS
CHAIR, 107TH CONGRESS



Eddie Bernice Johnson

Congress of the United States

30th District, Texas

PLEASE RESPOND TO:
WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2468 RAYBURN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4330
(202) 225-8885

DALLAS OFFICE:
3102 MAPLE AVENUE
SUITE 600
DALLAS, TX 75201
(214) 922-8885

WWW.HOUSE.GOV/EBJOHNSON/
REP.E.B.JOHNSON@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV

June 14, 2016

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States Congress
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States Congress
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Pallone,

Thank you for allowing me to enter my statement for the record for the Committee on Energy and Commerce full committee markup of H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, as amended. I am pleased to see this legislation moving forward in a bipartisan manner. This legislation strengthens many of the provisions that Congressman Tim Murphy and I collaborated on for the last three years.

As two of the few members of congress with experience as mental health providers, Rep. Murphy and I have unfortunately seen the federal mental health policies firsthand that inadvertently harm mentally ill patients. As the Chief Psychiatric Nurse for the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Dallas, I witnessed the unintended consequences of the deinstitutionalization process. Rep. Murphy not only has three decades of provider experience, he is also currently in the Navy Reserve Medical Service Corps and serves as a psychologist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda. Our bipartisan work on this legislation as two mental health professionals has always been patient-focused because we are both clinically patient-focused.

H.R. 2646 contains the provisions that would enable patients to access treatment and family and caregivers to help them access that treatment. First, establishing an Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder who has a doctoral degree in medicine or psychology will specifically focus on the federal mental health system and its many programs. Second, codifying the Medicaid managed care rule will ease our nation's chronic shortage of psychiatric beds that currently keeps many patients out of necessary treatment. Third, establishing a sense of congress and requiring the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to promulgate final rules clarifying the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, specifically the Privacy Rule, will enable family and caregivers to play a supportive role in the

patient's treatment. Last, increasing grant programs that have proven results such as Assisted Outpatient Treatment for individuals with serious mental illness will allow individuals to access the treatment they deserve and need in the least restrictive setting possible.

These provisions do not comprise the entire bill but I strongly believe that these changes to our federal mental health system will have an immediate impact on patients. I strongly believe that this legislation is a strong framework for comprehensively reforming our mental health system. I appreciate the work that Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Pallone have put into this measure and I am committed to continuing this work until we see it in action.

Sincerely,



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress