

**Opening Statement of Fred Upton  
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Full Committee Markup on “H.R. 2646, Helping Families in Mental Health  
Crisis Act”  
June 14, 2016**

This is an important markup as too many families across the country have experienced a loved one suffering from mental illness. Our committee is advancing meaningful reforms to our mental health care system that will better help these individuals and their families.

This is an issue that impacts every community in one way or another. From the heartbreaking tragedy in Newtown, Connecticut, that helped inspire this legislation, to the senseless rampage we endured in February in Kalamazoo, Michigan, we continue to hear tales of great loss where intervention was lacking or nonexistent. We have a bill thanks to the exhaustive efforts of Oversight and Investigations Chairman Murphy to help families in mental health crisis.

Those suffering from mental illness need the attention of this Congress. For too many, our fragmented system of grants, prevention, and treatment simply does not work. Tomorrow, the committee will consider legislation that achieves long sought reforms to help address all of these issues. H.R. 2646, the “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act,” includes new reforms to make sure the federal government is leveraging their dollars with investments in evidence-based programs. The bill includes reforms to provide the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Agency (SAMHSA) new tools, under the leadership of an Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, to do its job better.

The bill will also provide accountability so taxpayers can have more assurance we are doing the best with these critical dollars at SAMHSA to help those suffering from mental illness. H.R. 2646 calls on HHS to undertake rulemaking to ensure health care professionals can communicate to caregivers. In some cases, health care providers simply lack an understanding of what the law allows them to do – or not do – to help patients suffering from mental illness.

Additionally, H.R. 2646 includes new authorizations to expand treatment and expand our mental health workforce. This is a critically important area worthy of additional federal dollars and attention. Quite simply, if we need to be helping more folks at home, we need more trained professionals ready to do the job.

The committee has spent considerable time, on a bipartisan basis, trying to figure out the best way to enact meaningful reforms that will save lives, aid families, and provide comfort and relief to those struggling. That investment of time has led to a strong bill that Republicans and Democrats on this committee can be proud of.

This markup is the culmination of a multi-year, multi-Congress effort. In the aftermath of the events in Newtown, Chairman Murphy got to work. At the time mental health was a subject left for the shadows. Following an extensive O&I investigation that identified a problem, he commenced work on a thoughtful legislative solution. Throughout this process, we have achieved important reforms – most recently funding for the Assisted Outpatient Treatment grant program in December's year-end spending package, and we also saw CMS expand settings for caring for mentally ill in April.

Thoughtful legislating takes time and dedication. This Congress we have seen multi-year landmark efforts finally make it across the finish line in SGR reform, and updating our chemical safety laws, which will be signed into law in the coming days. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures has taken years, and we continue to make progress. And I am hopeful these mental health reforms that we have long pursued are on the same path to being signed into law.

This bill will make a real difference. Tomorrow, with what I expect will be a strong bipartisan vote, we'll mark another important milestone to delivering meaningful reforms. And I hope the House will swiftly follow our lead to ensure we did help in a time of mental health crisis.