

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115  
Majority (202) 225-2927  
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July 9, 2015

Mr. Harvey Rosenthal  
Executive Director  
New York Association of  
Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services  
194 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12210

Dear Mr. Rosenthal:

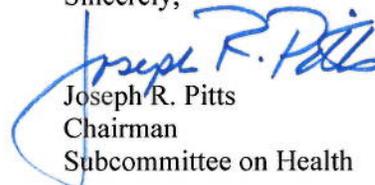
Thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Health on June 16, 2015, to testify at the hearing entitled "Examining H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act."

Pursuant to the Rules of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the hearing record remains open for ten business days to permit Members to submit additional questions for the record, which are attached. The format of your responses to these questions should be as follows: (1) the name of the Member whose question you are addressing, (2) the complete text of the question you are addressing in bold, and (3) your answer to that question in plain text.

To facilitate the printing of the hearing record, please respond to these questions with a transmittal letter by the close of business on July 23, 2015. Your responses should be mailed to Graham Pittman, Legislative Clerk, Committee on Energy and Commerce, 2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515 and e-mailed in Word format to [graham.pittman@mail.house.gov](mailto:graham.pittman@mail.house.gov).

Thank you again for your time and effort preparing and delivering testimony before the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph R. Pitts  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Health

cc: The Honorable Gene Green, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Health

Attachment

## Attachment — Additional Questions for the Record

### The Honorable Representative Lujan

One area that needs more attention is how to improve access to mental health services in rural areas such as my district. Mr. Rosenthal, as you know, individuals with mental illness face unique challenges to accessing mental health treatment and support services.

1. Could you briefly describe some of those challenges?

The challenge that I want to particularly focus on is the shortage of mental health professionals in rural settings. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), there are 146 mental health professional shortage areas in New Mexico.

2. Could you discuss strategies for increasing the mental health workforce in rural America?

New Mexico is very diverse. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, New Mexico is 47% Hispanic and 10% Native American and Alaska Natives. Therefore, increasing the mental health workforce, including the number of professionals from racial and ethnic backgrounds is important to my constituents.

3. Are there particularly strategies that work to recruit mental health providers from racial and ethnic backgrounds?

While I support the increased emphasis on workforce issues included in this bill, I want to make sure that we identify strategies to increase that workforce in rural communities as well as to increase participation by diverse individuals. Additionally, I want to point to a concern that I have with the authorization of the Minority Fellowship Program. As you know, for the last 40 years, the Minority Fellowship Program has been encouraging individuals from diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in mental health. While I support authorizing that program, I am concerned that the proposed funding level included in the bill is \$6 million, which is less than the \$10.669 million the MFP received in FY 2015.

4. Can you speak to the impact that this program has had and how decreased funding will impact it?
5. Do you have any suggestions on how we could strengthen this program or other ways we can promote a diverse healthcare workforce?

In my home state of New Mexico and across the nation we are grappling with how to best equip first responders and police officers when they're called into situations where they must deal with people suffering from mental health issues. Last year, the Albuquerque Police Department made national news when two officers fatally shot a mentally ill homeless man and the community is wrestling with how to reform the system. In my district, the Santa Fe the County government is funding a program meant to help those struggling with mental health or suicide and to help respond to domestic violence or substance abuse calls. The Mobile Crisis Response Team

(MCRT) will offer help via an already existing 24-hour hotline. Along with offering counseling over the phone, hotline operators will now dispatch licensed mental health clinicians and case managers to crisis locations when needed. The two-person teams can also be requested by first responders such as police officers. It's critical that we get the person in crisis to the appropriate treatment, instead of pushing them into the correctional system. Programs like this can be a great bridge.

6. Can you speak to ways crisis intervention programs like MCRT can impact the mental health system and how the federal government can provide support to this and similar efforts?