



Easter Seals

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September 14, 2015

Hon. Fred Upton
2183 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Frank Pallone
237 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Upton & Pallone:

Easter Seals writes today regarding the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, H.R. 2646. Easter Seals provides exceptional services so that children and adults with disabilities and their families achieving their full potential. Through our network of 74 independent affiliate organizations, Easter Seals is the go-to resource for 1.8 million people annually, providing exceptional programs, advocacy and services that respond to our communities' most pressing needs.

Easter Seals has long supported the work of the protection and advocacy agencies, and especially values the services authorized under the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program. Under current law, individuals with mental illness can access legal protections from discrimination in key areas of life such as education, employment, housing, health care, community living, voting and family rights. The provisions in H.R. 2646 narrow the scope of issues that are eligible for intervention by PAIMI program staff to only abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, abuse and neglect are only a few of the crucial areas in which people with mental illness need assistance. Supports to be successful in school, getting and retaining employment, remaining in safe housing and receiving appropriate health and mental health care are integral to securing a better life.

We strongly urge you to remove the restriction on the activities of the PAIMI program. Real success for individuals with serious mental health conditions requires access to tools to protect against discrimination in all key areas of life.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine Beh Neas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katherine Beh Neas
Executive Vice President, Public Affairs