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E&C Subcommittee on Health
21st Century Cures Implementation: Examining Mental Health
Initiatives
July 19, 2018

Good morning. Today we convene to hold an oversight hearing on the mental health division of the 21st Century Cures Act, which was signed into law in December 2016. On the anniversary of House passage of 21st Century Cures, this Subcommittee held a hearing on the sections of the law that the National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration are implementing. Today, we have Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz, the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, here to testify before us about the great work that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is doing to address our country's mental health needs.

The mental health title of 21st Century Cures was based upon the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016, which passed the House by a vote of 422-2 prior to its inclusion in Cures. This

legislative effort represents the most significant reforms to the mental health system in more than a decade.

The first provision within the mental health division strengthened the leadership and accountability at SAMHSA, including establishing Dr. McCance-Katz's position. One of her duties as the Assistant Secretary is to develop a strategic plan by the end of this fiscal year.

Cures also strengthened existing programs, including SAMHSA's two biggest programs, the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant. Given that each state and community is different, the law provides flexibility to states to address their unique mental health needs. Additionally, the law authorized the National Mental Health Policy Laboratory to carry out existing and new activities under the mental health policy umbrella, including awarding grants for promising service delivery models and expanding evidence-based programs.

Access to mental health and substance use disorder care, especially in the midst of an opioid epidemic, is vital to the overall health of our nation. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, approximately one in five adults in the United States experience mental illness per year. Of those adults suffering from mental illness, only 41 percent received mental health services in the past year. Title IX of 21st Century Cures focused on promoting access to mental health and substance use disorder care.

The programs included in this title authorized and strengthened several existing programs that had not been in statute. Some of these programs provide grants to eligible entities that provide mental health and substance use disorder services to homeless individuals and jail diversion programs. Additionally, the title authorized a program to further integrate primary care and behavioral health care services through demonstration projects. Notably, 21st Century Cures expanded

the target population of this integration to include additional populations, such as certain qualifying children and adolescents.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released a Vital Signs report that showed rising suicide rates across the United States. In 2016, we lost nearly 45,000 lives to suicide. 21st Century Cures aimed to provide additional suicide prevention resources by codifying the National Suicide Prevention Hotline and authorizing the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Resource Center and Youth Suicide Prevention State Grants.

The existence of all of these programs would be far less impactful if we did not have an adequate workforce to provide services; therefore there was an entire subtitle dedicated to strengthening the mental and behavioral health care workforce through training grants, demonstration programs, and other means.

Cures established several new grant programs to address mental health needs in populations, such as mothers and children. One program provides grants to support statewide or regional pediatric mental health care telehealth access programs. Such programs could be especially helpful in early identification and treatment of mental health issues in our school-aged children. This is especially critical because 50 percent of all chronic mental illness begins by age 14. Another program awards grants to states for the purpose of screening and treating depression among women who are pregnant or who have given birth in the past year.

21st Century Cures made meaningful, long-sought reforms to our mental health system, and is the result of thoughtful, bipartisan legislation crafted over the course of several years. While this law reflects our diligence and our commitment to improving America's overall mental health, there remains much work to be done.