

Mental Health Liaison Group

August 6, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Alexander and Murray:

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)- a coalition of national organizations representing consumers/patients, family members, advocates, professionals and providers- is writing to express our support for S. 1893, the Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act of 2015.

We applaud your bipartisan leadership on legislation reauthorizing and improving programs aimed at increasing awareness, prevention, and early identification of mental health conditions, and promoting linkages to evidence-based treatments and services for children and youth. Among the important provisions included for reauthorization is the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act, one of the foundational programs underpinning our national suicide prevention strategy. S. 1893 also reauthorizes the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative, which addresses childhood trauma in environments as varied as gun violence and natural disasters, and is a critically important national resource for all child-serving systems.

The Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act of 2015 also fosters early detection of widely prevalent mental disorders by key segments of the community, including teachers and emergency personnel. Finally, we commend you for calling for an investigation and analysis of federal requirements that act as barriers to the greater integration of mental and behavioral health care with primary care, for making improvements to our nation's awareness and understanding of treatment approaches to opioid use disorders, and for the other notable provisions of S. 1893.

Congratulations to both of you for your bipartisanship on these important mental health issues. We look forward to continuing to work with you to enact this legislation and to advance related mental health reform efforts through the Senate.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Laurel Stine, J.D., American Psychological Association at lstine@apa.org
and Debbie Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Mental Health America at dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.net

American Association on Health and Disability *
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Hospital Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
First Focus Campaign for Children
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Directors Alcohol & Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Behavioral Health
NHMH-No Health without Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
Tourette Association of America
ZERO TO THREE

*MHLG Observer Group