June 30, 2016

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker  Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives  U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker and Madam Leader:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge you to support H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015, when it is taken up on the House floor for a vote.

We have a mental health crisis in this country. America’s suicide rate is the highest it has been in 30 years. Every year, over 40,000 people die by suicide. Every day, millions of Americans go without the mental health services and supports they need. Families are struggling to find care for their loved ones and countless individuals are experiencing homelessness, incarceration and disability instead of lives of fulfillment and recovery.

Congress has worked across the aisle and in collaboration with the mental health community to find promising solutions to improve our nation’s mental health care. As you are both aware, but the significance is noteworthy—H.R. 2646 passed unanimously out of the House Energy & Commerce Committee. Today, it represents the culmination of bipartisan work to forge a foundation for enhancing mental health services and supports.

H.R. 2646 helps address our severe workforce shortage, promotes integrated service delivery, early identification and intervention, and provides the full range of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) services to children receiving inpatient psychiatric hospital services in settings allowable under the Psych Under-21 benefit. In addition, the bill also supports suicide prevention and peer support services, clarifies and provides training regarding communications under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), affords liability protections for volunteer health professionals, strengthens crisis services and provides greater clarity on mental health parity.

The broad mental health community is pleased and gratified to support this bipartisan legislation. We now need your leadership to ensure that the hope that this important first step in mental health reform offers to millions of children, adults and older adults—and to the overall health of our nation—is realized at last.

Sincerely,

American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Clinical Social Work Association
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
Eating Disorders Coalition
The Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America (MHA)
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS)
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Register of Health Service Psychologists
Parity Implementation Coalition
Sandy Hook Promise
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project
Treatment Advocacy Center