



March 24, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Health Education  
Labor & Pensions  
725 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Health Education  
Labor & Pensions  
525 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Purpose: Support for the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016**

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

On behalf of the New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services (NYAPRS), I write to express our strong support for the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016.

NYAPRS supports a statewide coalition of tens of thousands of New Yorkers with psychiatric disabilities or diagnoses and community recovery providers from across our state that have worked together over the past 20 years to improve services, social conditions and public policy by advancing their recovery, rights and community integration.

We believe the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016 – as it currently stands – reflects a well-balanced understanding of necessary improvements to our nation’s mental health care system. It builds on the strong and seasoned leadership of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) by formalizing a partnership between it and the proposed HHS Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

The legislation also maintains critical funding for block grants that allow community providers to deliver essential services to those with the greatest needs. Moreover, it promotes evidence-based practices that help bridge the gap between research and application.

Above all, we believe the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016 provides an ambitious and most welcome alternative to Congressman Murphy’s *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act* (HR.2646) measure that wrongly incentivizes involuntary outpatient commitment, unnecessarily weakens the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and essentially eliminates the capability of Protection and Advocacy organizations that increase rather than discourage access to needed care.

It is our hope that any amendments to the Senate legislation do not erode its much needed impact by repealing the IMD Exclusion, an action which will wrongly commit tens of billions of precious federal funds to expand inpatient beds rather than investing it in robust, front-end, community-based services that have been proven to help people with serious mental health conditions and their families.

On behalf of our NYAPRS community, I want to extend our great thanks to you and the Committee for your thoughtful leadership on this critically important piece of mental health legislation, and commit ourselves to actively work in support of its passage.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [harveyr@nyaprs.org](mailto:harveyr@nyaprs.org) or 518.436.0008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harvey Rosenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Harvey Rosenthal  
Executive Director