



March 8, 2016

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Women & Families

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Karen McGill Lawson

The Honorable Fred Upton  
Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
2183 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
237 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Oppose the “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015” (H.R. 2646)**

Dear Chair Upton and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 200 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the 109 undersigned organizations, we write to urge you to oppose H.R. 2646, the “Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2015.”

We believe that this legislation will result in outdated, biased, and inappropriate treatment of people with a mental health diagnosis. There are a number of troubling provisions including those that would:

- End innovative or newly created programs;
- Require involuntary outpatient commitment, creating an adverse effect on the work being done to provide community based treatment and peer-to-peer services, particularly affecting African Americans, who are overrepresented in forced outpatient treatment programs;
- Reduce the privacy protections of confidential health information for persons with mental illness; and
- End the important work of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI), a program that positively impacts millions of individuals with psychiatric disabilities by working with individuals, families, and the entire criminal justice system to foster better understanding and relationships.

While we agree that there is a clear need to update the current mental health services system, especially for communities of diverse backgrounds, we have significant concerns with several of the provisions set forth in H.R. 2646. The legislation will cause serious harm to many of the programs used in the community that provide support and services to people with psychiatric disabilities. We ask that you oppose the bill until these concerns are addressed.

The current formulation of H.R. 2646 will function to eliminate basic civil and human rights protections for those with mental illness. We urge you to oppose this legislation and to move forward with mental health legislation that strengthens and improves many of the current programs working to change lives as well as protect the civil and human rights of persons with psychiatric disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lisa Bornstein, Legal Director, at 202-466-3311 or bornstein@civilrights.org.

Respectfully submitted:

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
ACAMP  
ADAPT  
ADAPT Montana  
Advocates For Children of NY  
AFCAMP  
African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc.  
Alyssum Inc  
American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)  
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  
American Foundation for the Blind (AFB)  
Amnesty International USA  
Another Way Inc.  
APNI Inc  
The Arc of the United States  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles  
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Behavioral Health & Wellness  
Campaign for Real Change in Mental Health Policy  
Center for Disability Rights (NYS)  
The Center for Exceptional Families, Inc  
Centro Margarita  
Coalition for Mental Health Reform  
Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc.  
Crump Attorney's at Law  
Delaware Family Voices  
The Daniel Initiative  
Disability Policy Consortium  
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)  
Empowerment Temple AME  
Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (NC)  
F I R S T  
Family Connection of South Carolina

Family Network on Disabilities  
Family Voices Colorado  
Family Voices Indiana  
Family Voices of California - State Affiliate Organization of Family Voices  
Family Voices of NJ  
Family Voices of Tennessee  
Federation for Children with Special Needs  
Federation of Families of South Carolina  
Focus On Recovery -United  
Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network  
Grassroots Empowerment Project  
Human Rights Campaign (HRC)  
Individual Citizen  
Iu-Mien Community Services  
KEY Consumer Organization, Inc.  
Korean American Resource and Cultural Center  
Korean Resource Center  
Lambda Legal  
Maine Parent Federation, Inc.  
Mommieactivist and sons  
MS Family2Family HIEC  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)  
NAMI Connecticut  
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Rights Protection and Advocacy (NARPA)  
National Association of the Deaf (NAD)  
National Bar Association  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery  
National Council of Churches  
National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Down Syndrome Congress (NDSC)  
National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA)  
National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN)  
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium  
National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA)  
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
The National Network for Arab American Communities  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center (NWLC)  
New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc.  
New York Association of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services  
Not Dead Yet  
Oklahoma Parents Center

Oregon Consumer Survivor Coalition  
Oregon Mental Health Consumer and Psychiatric Survivor Coalition  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center  
Parent to Parent of Georgia  
Parent to Parent USA  
The Parents' Place of Maryland  
Partners Resource Network TEAM Project  
PAVE  
PEAL Center  
Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association  
Pyramid CPRC  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)  
TASH  
Transformative Justice Coalition  
Treatment Access Expansion Project  
Treatment Communities of America  
United Spinal Association  
United We Stand of New York  
UPLIFT  
Vermont Family Network  
Vermont Psychiatric Survivors, Inc.  
Western Mass Recovery Learning Community  
Women Who Never Give Up

Cc: House Education and Workforce Committee Leadership – Chair John Kline and Minority Leader Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott

House Ways and Means Committee Leadership – Chair Kevin Brady and Minority Leader Sander M. Levin