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Executive Director
NASMHPD

July 5, 2016

Hon. Paul D. Ryan
Speaker
1233 Longworth House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
233 Cannon House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: H.R. 2646, *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act*

Dear Speaker Ryan and Democratic Leader Pelosi:

The National Association of Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)—the organization representing the state executives responsible for the \$41 billion public mental health service delivery systems serving 7.3 million people annually in 50 states, 4 territories, and the District of Columbia—supports the U.S. House of Representatives as it votes to strengthen our country's behavioral health system through passage of H.R. 2646, the *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act*.

NASMHPD believes passage of H.R. 2646 will be an important step in building behavioral health system capacity and greater access to behavioral health services, while also providing additional means to ensure quality of services—all in the service of assisting individuals with mental illness and individuals with substance use disorders to achieve recovery through a meaningful, fulfilling, and accomplished role in society.

We look forward to House leaders and Senate leaders working together to merge H.R. 2646 and the Senate Mental Health Reform legislation (currently S. 2680) into a strong, comprehensive behavioral health reform measure that meets the needs of individuals bearing the burdens of mental illness and substance use disorder. In producing a final comprehensive Act, it is NASMHPD's hope that Congress will take the opportunity to align with HIPAA disclosure provisions 42 U.S.C. § 290dd-2, a 1970s-era statute that limits disclosure of substance use disorders treatment information among providers. We also urge Congress to consider further exceptions to the IMD exclusion beyond the one currently included in H.R. 2646.

NASMHPD looks forward to continuing to work with members of both houses of Congress as you advance this historic measure designed to improve the lives and futures of individuals with behavioral health conditions.

With respect and appreciation,



Brian Hepburn, M.D.
Executive Director
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)