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Executive Vice President & COO

Karen McGill Lawson

March 8, 2016

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We believe that this legislation will result in outdated, biased, and inappropriate treatment of people with a mental health diagnosis.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 (NJN)
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