

December 12, 2013

To: Members of Congress

Mental Illness Policy Org. is a non-partisan, research-based think-tank on serious mental illness. We are financially supported by mothers of individuals with serious mental illness who often beg for but cannot get treatment for their seriously mentally ill loved ones. Many become tragedies. Some become headlines.

**We strongly urge you to support the proposals of Rep. Tim Murphy.** His bill would help fix the following real problems mothers of persons with serious mental illness face everyday:

1. Because of HIPAA, moms can't get information on what hospital their loved ones are in, when they will be released, what medications they need, when appointments are or any of the information they need to provide care and prevent a tragedy.
2. Because of Medicaid restrictions ("IMD Exclusion"<sup>1</sup>), our loved ones with mental illness can't get hospitalized when they need it. As a result, they are forced into shelters, jails, prisons and morgues. There are three times as many Americans incarcerated for mental illness as hospitalized.<sup>2</sup>
3. Civil commitment laws prevent moms from getting help for their mentally ill loved ones who are so sick, they don't know they are sick ("I am the Messiah", "The FBI planted a transmitter in my head") until *after* they become 'danger to self or others'.<sup>3</sup> Rather than prevent violence, laws require it. Assisted Outpatient Treatment would allow courts to require a very narrow group (only people with serious mental illness and a prior history of arrest, violence or needless hospitalizations) to stay in treatment as a condition of living in the community and order the mental health system to provide the treatment. AOT is proven to dramatically reduce homelessness, hospitalization, arrest, incarceration, violence, and suicide in persons with the most serious mental illnesses who are not helped by voluntary treatment.<sup>4</sup> By reducing hospitalization and incarceration it cuts taxpayer costs in half. It is less restrictive, and more humane than the alternatives our relatives face: inpatient commitment or incarceration.
4. In spite of spending \$203 billion<sup>5</sup> on mental *health* (2014), our seriously mentally *ill* relatives can't get care. They are a very small part (5-8% of total population<sup>6</sup>), of the overall mental health population (25-40% of population), but are shunned by the mental health system which focuses on the higher functioning.<sup>7</sup> Programs to eliminate bullying, bad grades, job dissatisfaction, and marriage problems are routinely funded under the guise of being mental illness programs while hospitals and medical services for the seriously mentally ill are closed. Rep. Murphy proposes to investigate how funds are spent with the hope to focus existing expenditures where they would do the most good.
5. The federal government is preventing us from seeing our relatives get care. Specifically SAMHSA encourages states to use mental health block grant monies on programs that don't help people with serious mental illness, thereby starving programs that do. They fund groups opposed to medical models of treatment and supportive of unproven and sometimes dangerous alternative treatments.<sup>8</sup>

Every day mothers of persons with mental illness are forced to fight the system to get care for their seriously mentally ill relatives many of whom have schizophrenia. These proposals will help moms, persons with serious mental illness, law enforcement, the public, taxpayers and government. Please support.

DJ Jaffe, Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> IMD Overview: <http://mentalillnesspolicy.org/media/bestmedia/imd-exclusion-washington-post.html>. IMD Details: <http://mentalillnesspolicy.org/imd/imd-legal-analysis.html>

<sup>2</sup> Three times as many mentally ill incarcerated: <http://mentalillnesspolicy.org/NGRI/jails-vs-hospitals.html>

<sup>3</sup> Uncivil Liberties: <http://mentalillnesspolicy.org/media/bestmedia/uncivilliberties.html>

<sup>4</sup> AOT Research: <http://kendras-law.org/kendras-law/research/kendras-law-studies.html>

<sup>5</sup> SAMHSA US Mental Health Expenditures: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA08-4326/SMA08-4326.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> NIMH statistics on serious mental illness: [http://www.nimh.nih.gov/statistics/SMI\\_AASR.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/statistics/SMI_AASR.shtml)

<sup>7</sup> Focus on mental health kills mentally ill: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dj-jaffe/mental-health-kills-the-m\\_b\\_426672.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dj-jaffe/mental-health-kills-the-m_b_426672.html)

<sup>8</sup> SAMHSA Problems Overview: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/sep/16/counterproductive-craziness-at-federal-agency/>  
Contact Mental Illness Policy Org for more on SAMHSA.