

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Examining H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act”
June 16, 2015

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Mental illness affects millions of Americans and their families, yet sadly many are going without treatment and families are struggling to find care for loved ones. Following the tragic events of Newtown, Connecticut, the Energy and Commerce Committee led a multiyear review of the federal mental health system. Ensuring treatments and resources are available and effectively used for those suffering with mental illness has remained a priority of this committee throughout the past several years.

Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chairman Tim Murphy spearheaded our thorough review of all federal mental health programs. The committee held a series of public forums, briefings, and investigative hearings to determine how federal dollars are being prioritized and spent on research and treatment, particularly for serious mental illness. To address the flaws discovered in the extensive and wide-ranging examination, Chairman Murphy introduced H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013. Two major pieces of that bill became law in the 113th Congress and today we continue our efforts and look to build upon that success.

Dr. Murphy has reintroduced his bill this Congress, building upon the previous bipartisan version while updating it to include new findings from the Committee’s continuing investigation. H.R. 2646 would remove federal barriers to care, clarify privacy standards for families and caregivers, reform outdated federal programs, expand parity accountability, invest in services for those with serious mental illness, and promote evidence-based care.

Every community has been impacted in some fashion. To our community leaders on the frontlines, folks like Jeff Patton who runs the Kalamazoo Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services – we say thank you.

And to those families who have been impacted by mental illness in some form – Congress is aware of your plight and we can and must do better.

I’d like to thank the witnesses for taking the time to testify before the Subcommittee – in particular former Congressman Patrick Kennedy and Virginia State Senator Creigh Deeds. We have an all-star panel for sure.

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