

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chairman
House Labor/HHS Appropriations
Subcommittee
2358B Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Labor/HHS Appropriations
Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kingston and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We were pleased that the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 funded Mental Health First Aid at \$15 million, and we are writing in support of additional funding for Mental Health First Aid. As your subcommittee begins work on the Fiscal Year 2015 Appropriations bill for the Department of Health and Human Services, we urge you to include \$20 million for this important mental health training program that will improve education and awareness about mental illness in our communities.

This request reflects language in bipartisan legislation we have introduced that replaces an existing program administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which has been funded at \$25 million, with an evidence-based grant program that will save taxpayers \$5 million while delivering better results.

Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based education program that helps the public identify, understand, and respond to the signs of mental illness. Funding will provide training to teachers, students, firefighters, police officers, emergency services workers and others and give these persons the tools necessary to respond to mental health crises and connect individuals with mental health resources and services.

Mental Health First Aid has attracted broad support because it adopts a proactive, preventative approach to mental illness. According to the most recent research from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), if mental health providers can intervene early, particularly among individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses, the clinical effectiveness of psychiatric services increases substantially, while long-term care costs are reduced.

To continue this program's success through a range of community partners, we have also included report language to define the scope of grantees to include local police and fire departments, veterans' service organizations, hospital systems, colleges and universities, faith communities, local tribal entities, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), and Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs), among others.

Therefore, we ask that the Committee add this language to the FY15 Department of Health and Human Services report:

"The Committee recommends \$20,000,000 for the Mental Health First Aid. This program instructs training audiences on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of common mental disorders, teaches crisis de-escalation techniques, and facilitates referrals to mental health services for individuals in psychiatric crisis. Consistent with a broad public safety approach, the Committee directs that eligible grantees be expanded to include veteran service organizations, local law enforcement agencies, fire departments, emergency medical services units, hospital systems and institutions of higher education among other entities."

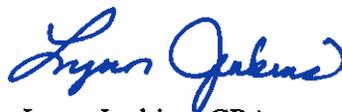
As mental illness impacts the lives of millions of Americans and their families and too many mental health disorders continue to go undiagnosed and untreated, we must make prudent investments to improve mental health awareness in our communities. That is why we urge you to support funding for Mental Health First Aid in FY2014.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Ron Barber
Member of Congress



Lynn Jenkins, CPA
Member of Congress



Joe Courtney
Member of Congress



Don Young
Member of Congress



David Cicilline
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress



Chris Gibson
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Dave Loebsack
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Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



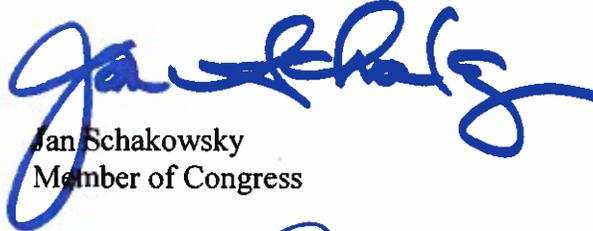
Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Gloria Negrete McLeod
Member of Congress



Tim Walz
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Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



John Delaney
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
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