

psychiatric beds. It requires the oversight and enforcement of parity laws and extends coverage to people with eating disorders.

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act has been endorsed by more than 40 professional organizations, by 77 newspapers, and has 207 bipartisan cosponsors.

We write with the vital request that the Senate take up and pass the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act in order to fix our Nation's mental health system. It must take priority over any partisan divide. We, respectfully, ask that the Senate advance this bill to provide treatment before tragedy and to provide desperately needed and fully deserved help.

Along these lines, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to also contact my office to cosign this letter that pleads with the Senate to please move this bill quickly so that we don't have to see more tragedy, so that we can provide treatment, so that we can relieve Americans of this terrible scourge of mental illness without treatment, and so that we may provide quick and life-saving action because, where there is no help, there is no hope.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, September 22, 2016.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER MCCONNELL AND MINORITY LEADER REID: We are in the midst of a mental health crisis in America. One in five Americans will experience mental illness this year. There are 10 million adults with a serious mental illness (SMI), but nearly 40% do not receive treatment. The reasons for this are a critical shortage of qualified providers, a dearth of crisis psychiatric beds, failed mental health parity implementation, and most importantly the absence of strong federal leadership. We are asking the Senate to pass the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act before their district work period break. Delays in enacting this into law will contribute to more crime, violence, homelessness, and the daily deaths of 959 Americans as a result of a mental illness. The level of this crisis was learned during the 4 year long House investigation, the major findings of which are listed below.

CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED PROVIDERS

There are 9,000 Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists for 17 million children with a mental health condition, but there is a need for 30,000;

African Americans are half as likely to receive psychiatric treatment;

For Hispanics with a mental disorder, fewer than 1 in 11 see a mental health specialist;

55% of counties do not have a practicing psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker;

72% of states have a shortage of psychiatric nurses;

Over the last decade the total number of physicians has increased by 45% but the number of psychiatrists has only increased 12%;

The average time between onset of first symptoms of psychosis and first treatment is 80 weeks.

DEARTH OF PSYCHIATRIC CRISIS BEDS

There is a nation-wide shortage of 100,000 crisis psychiatric beds;

In 1955 there were 550,000 psychiatric beds, but today there are only 40,000;

Only one state (Mississippi) has enough beds to meet the minimum standard;

When patients are in crisis they are often diverted to jails, boarded in Emergency Rooms, or released without treatment.

PARITY

It has been nearly a decade since parity became law, yet there is no oversight, monitoring or enforcement;

Americans with eating disorders still cannot get coverage of their treatment.

FAILED FEDERAL LEADERSHIP

In the area of mental health, the federal government spends \$130 billion annually by 112 agencies across 8 separate departments;

In a stunning and groundbreaking report the GAO exposed that federal mental health programs have nearly no coordination, few evaluations, and four out of five do not require evidence-based practices;

55% of Medicaid funding goes to 5% of the Medicaid population and nearly all of those patients have a mental health condition.

VIOLENCE

While individuals with a mental health condition are NOT more violent than the general public, those with untreated psychosis are 15 times more likely to be violent when not in treatment;

80 percent of violent acts committed by those with untreated psychosis are attributable directly to their illness.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Of those Americans in local jails 64% have mental illness, 56% in state prison, and 45% in federal prison;

Mentally ill inmates cost taxpayers three times more than those without a mental illness;

Incarcerating someone with a mental illness is 20 times more expensive than community treatment;

Over 70% of people in jails with serious mental illness also have a substance use disorder;

Individuals with a mental illness are 4 to 6 times more likely to be the victim of sexual violence.

HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY

Over one-third of Americans experiencing homelessness have a serious mental illness.

People with serious mental illness are three times more likely to be in poverty.

PREVENTABLE DEATHS

Having a serious mental illness is worse for someone's health than chronic heavy smoking;

Those with a serious mental illness die 10-25 years prematurely;

There are 43,000 suicides, and 90% of those suicides have mental illness as a contributing factor;

350,000 Americans die each year as a direct or indirect result of a mental illness.

H.R. 2646

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act, the most transformational crisis mental health reform bill in 50 years, passed the House with near unanimous support on July 16, 2016 by a vote of 422-2. Our legislation delivers treatment before tragedy and fixes the problems above identified by the House investigations. The legislation:

Reforms the federal government approach to mental health by establishing the critically important leadership position of Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders (who must be a doctor) to replace the Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration;

The Assistant Secretary will bring accountability, effectiveness, and coordination

to the federal government's 112 mental health programs, and develop a national strategy for increasing the mental health workforce;

Increases the number of providers for SMI by supporting postdoctoral psychologists, authorizing minority fellowships, allowing doctors to volunteer at federally qualified community health centers, and provides funding for tele-mental health to increase access in underserved areas;

Provides additional psychiatric hospital beds for those experiencing an acute mental health crisis and in need of short term immediate inpatient care for stabilization;

Requires oversight and enforcement of parity and extends parity coverage to eating disorders;

Establishes a National Mental Health Policy Laboratory to set objective and scientific outcome measures for mental health spending;

Authorizes the Suicide Prevention Hotline; Incentivizes states to provide community-based alternatives to jails, prisons, and institutionalization.

The Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act is the product of years of collaboration between dedicated members of Congress, as well as numerous organizations, who came together to offer feedback and suggestions. The bill has also been endorsed by more than 40 professional organizations, 77 editorial boards and newspapers, 207 bipartisan Members of Congress, and hundreds of individual physicians, patients, and families.

Given the urgency of the mental health crisis in America, we write with the vital request that the Senate take up and pass the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act before you break for district work period. We understand the nature of the short schedule during the month of September, but we maintain that fixing our nation's mental health system must take priority over scheduling or any partisan divide. We know that every day more than 900 lives are lost in our nation due—directly or indirectly—to mental health. That translates to over 70,000 preventable deaths since the House passed H.R. 2646 in July.

At a time when thousands of lives are on the line, delays and politics cannot overrule compassion and common sense. We respectfully ask you to advance this bill to provide treatment before tragedy, and H.R. 2646 will provide desperately needed, and fully deserved, help. We call on you to pass H.R. 2646 because where there is help, there is hope.

Sincerely,

TIM MURPHY,

Ph.D.

EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON,

R.N.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S BORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of a simple yet important piece of border security legislation that I hope to see signed into law shortly. This legislation will help to secure our borders, save taxpayer dollars, and help the men and women who have served our Nation honorably to continue to serve and protect America in much-needed, technologically advanced positions.

My legislation makes a simple fix that would allow the Customs and Border Patrol Commissioner to waive the polygraph requirement for soon-to-be

veterans who seek employment as UAV pilots within the Department of Homeland Security who come from the Department of Defense with current security clearances. The DOD typically invests a significant amount of training and career development resources in these men and women, and to lose their talent due to a lapse in interdepartmental communication is a detriment to our country.

Under the current system, when soon-to-be veterans who are unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV, pilots wish to apply for a UAV position at the DHS, they are placed on a wait list until more money and time is used to determine if these veterans meet DHS security guidelines despite having already passed similar security background checks performed by the Department of Defense. This creates a near impossible bottleneck where veterans can be stuck for months or years in waiting on redundant procedures, forcing most to drop their applications and go elsewhere to find employment.

The result of this bureaucratic inefficiency is that veterans who have valuable skills that can help protect our Nation and in whom we have invested millions of dollars in training are lost to other jobs. This leaves DHS Border Protection positions unfilled and our borders more vulnerable. The country's security, veterans, and taxpayers all lose in this equation.

This legislation works to solve three key problems by creating job opportunities for veterans, securing the borders, and saving taxpayer dollars. It is just plain common sense, and I urge the full consideration and adoption of this measure.

A GREAT MINNESOTA LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. EMMER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Hormel Foods CEO Jeffrey Ettinger on his upcoming retirement.

Hormel is a recognized Minnesota leader in food processing. The company started in Austin, Minnesota, in 1891 and is best known for giving us the famous canned ham—Spam.

Jeffrey's career at Hormel Foods has now spanned nearly three decades. From starting out as a corporate attorney in 1989 to eventually becoming the CEO in 2005, Jeffrey has played a crucial role in Hormel's success. Jeffrey encouraged a focus on new product innovation, and under his leadership, Hormel has continued to grow and thrive. During his time with Hormel, Jeffrey has even been recognized as one of the world's best CEOs by Barron's—a true tribute to his work ethic and excellence. While he is retiring as CEO, Jeffrey's leadership at Hormel will go on, as he will continue to serve as chairman of the board.

Congratulations on your retirement, Jeffrey, and thank you for all of the

work you have done for Hormel Foods so that it remains a leading company in the food industry both in Minnesota and in our great country.

TOP HONORS FOR ANOKA-RAMSEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Minnesota's very own Anoka-Ramsey Community College, which has recently been named one of the top 10 community colleges in the United States. This placement has made Anoka-Ramsey Community College a contender for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence.

It is no surprise to me that Anoka-Ramsey, the sole Minnesota contender to be recognized, has been chosen for this prestigious award given its stellar reputation throughout our community. This fine higher learning institution is well-known for affordable tuition, a high success rate of students who graduate, as well as high achievement rates for students of every ethnicity and background. A good education can open doors in life.

Thank you, Anoka-Ramsey, for handing our students the key. Good luck in the competition, and congratulations on your success.

A PARENT'S LOVE

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate Joy and Matthew Molitor, from Minnesota's Sixth District, who received an Angels in Adoption Award this year.

The Molitors' adoption story began in 2011. While on a trip to Haiti, they decided to adopt two young children, Wilson and Catherine. For the next 3½ years, the Molitors visited Haiti 15 times while patiently waiting to take their children home.

In 2015, the Molitors received the devastating news that their paperwork was no longer valid and that the Haitian Government was no longer allowing simple adoptions. This did not stop them.

For the next 4 months, Joy walked from one government agency to the next, despite the unstable political environment in the country. She was determined not to leave Haiti without her children. As a result of Joy's resolve, she eventually retained the visas for her children, and they were able to go home to Minnesota together.

Joy and Matthew Molitor are the perfect example of the lengths one will go because of a parent's love. I am proud to recognize them today.

Thank you, Joy and Matthew, and congratulations on your Angels in Adoption Award.

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. EMMER of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. It is time to bring awareness to this heartless disease and to the demands and challenges of the families affected.

Childhood cancer is an especially important topic in our office. My deputy chief of staff, Robert Boland's daugh-

ter, Abigail, was diagnosed with retinoblastoma, which is a rare cancer that affects the eyes, when she was only 2 months old. Thankfully, Abigail survived her cancer and is a happy, growing little girl. Abigail and her parents are fortunate, but they, like all families who deal with childhood cancer, had many a sleepless night.

No parent should ever have to watch a child fight a life-threatening disease. Unfortunately, that is not the case for many. Every year in the United States, there are more than 15,000 children who are diagnosed with cancer. Statistics show that 80 percent of childhood cancer cases are diagnosed only after the disease has already metastasized and spread. This makes research absolutely necessary. That is why we must spread the word and raise awareness.

All children deserve a future, and it is vital that we do everything in our power to help give them that chance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to direct their remarks to the Chair and not to a perceived viewing audience.

RECOGNIZING RICHARD K. "DICK" BLAKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. POSEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POSEY. Mr. Speaker, it is, indeed, an honor and a pleasure to recognize the lifetime achievements of Richard K. "Dick" Blake, who is retiring after 40 years of service on the Rockledge City Council. He is the longest serving elected official on Florida's east coast and is a true servant heart leader.

The grandson of freed slaves, Dick Blake was one of 10 children growing up in Rockledge, Florida. He attended Cocoa's African American Monroe High School, where he became an all-star athlete and model student.

After graduating from Florida A&M University, Dick returned to Monroe High School to coach basketball and football and also to teach biology and math. While coaching during the era of segregated education, he gained statewide notoriety as his basketball teams dominated the Florida Interscholastic Athletic Association.

□ 1115

In fact, Dick helped pave the way for integration in Brevard County by arranging exhibition basketball games, which helped to foster race relations by bringing children, families, and communities together under the spirit of sports competition. In so doing, he touched the lives of so many talented players and students.

In 1966, Dick became the first Black assistant principal at Cocoa High School, and later became the principal, serving in that position for 22 years.

A staunch believer in the power of education, Dick earned a bachelor of science degree from Clafflin University, a master of science degree from Columbia University, and a master of science degree from Florida A&M University.