

April 16, 2015

The Honorable Lynn Jenkins
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Jenkins:

On behalf of the National Council for Behavioral Health, and our 2,300 member organizations, I am writing to thank you for your introduction of the Mental Health First Aid Act of 2015. This bill is critical to raising awareness of and increasing public education on mental illness and addiction disorders.

Each year, more than 1 in 5 Americans experiences a mental health or substance use disorder, according to data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Yet, U.S. society remains largely ignorant about the signs and symptoms of mental illness, ignoring our role as supportive community members to help people experiencing these illnesses.

The Mental Health First Aid Act goes a long way toward raising Americans' awareness of mental illness and addictions and helping them learn how to reach out to a family member or friend in need. The program introduces people to risk factors and warning signs of mental health and substance use problems, and teaches them a five-step action plan to aid people in distress. This legislation will provide critical public education that ultimately will increase access to care.

Every day, we see the effects of our decades-long neglect of Americans' substance abuse and mental healthcare needs. Your passion in helping improve the lives of Americans with mental health and substance use conditions is inspiring. Thank you for your ongoing and continued leadership in sparking investments in mental health that will help all Americans live longer, more fulfilling lives.

The National Council strongly supports this bill and looks forward to working with you to see it through to passage.

Sincerely,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW
President and CEO
National Council for Behavioral Health