

Opening Statement

Health Subcommittee Hearing “Examining H.R. 2646, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis”

Rep. Gene Green

June 16, 2015

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing on mental health care reform.

The Affordable Care Act made important changes in the field of mental and behavioral health.

The landmark law expanded access to mental and behavioral health services, advanced parity of coverage, and enabled States to expand their Medicaid programs so that millions more Americans could access affordable, quality coverage.

While the ACA made great strides towards improving access to mental and behavioral health services, the mental health care system is in need of reform.

In our efforts to advance reform, it is critical that the patient remain at the center of our focus.

Approximately 10 million Americans suffer from serious mental health illnesses, including major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and post-traumatic stress syndrome.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness reports that “between 70 to 90 percent of individuals have a significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life” with the appropriate treatment and support.

The numbers show that treatment works.

Even though the overwhelming majority individuals with mental and substance use disorders improved after receiving treatment, almost half of all adults living with a serious mental illness did not receive treatment in the past year.

Given that statistics show that treatment is effective, and that a considerable number of adults still go without treatment, our efforts to improve the mental healthcare system must empower patients and their caregivers with access to a range of treatment and support services.

We must also remove barriers to that access.

In today’s hearing, we are considering several pieces of legislation that seek to reform or improve our mental healthcare system.

They are H.R. 2646, the “Helping Families in Mental Crisis Act” and H.R. 2690, the “Including Families in Mental Recovery Act.”

I appreciate my colleague from Pennsylvania, Mr. Murphy's endeavor to advance comprehensive mental health reform and his tireless efforts to elevate the conversation around mental health.

However, I have concerns that this legislation does not adequately take into account the diversity and complexity of mental health needs that patients and their caregivers present.

Comprehensive mental health reform must feature community centered options that focus on recovery and prevention.

We must ensure that reforms are patient-centered and address the full continuum of care.

I look forward to hearing more about this legislative proposal during today's hearing.

I also appreciate my colleague from California, Congresswoman Matsui, for her effort to improve mental healthcare delivery in the Including Families in Mental Recovery Act.

This legislation seeks to improve the understanding of providers, patients and caregivers on how HIPAA

requirements apply in the mental health space.

It will clarify HIPAA privacy standards for the release of protected information to patients' families and caregivers, and increase education on this critical issue.

I thank the witnesses here today, and I look forward to hearing your perspectives on ways to improve mental health care services in a way that best serves patients and their families.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.