



Rep. Tom Emmer on Mental Health

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****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** During my time in Congress, I've become increasingly aware of an issue that is in serious need of attention. I'm talking about mental health. World Mental Health Day is observed on October 10th, and this is Mental Illness Awareness Week. In countries all over the world and here at home, there continues to be a stigma associated with mental illness. This stigma, which we see changing, albeit slowly, is an obstacle to the ability of society to identify and treat persons suffering from issues with their mental health. The failure to recognize and address the serious mental health issues of our time can lead to devastating consequences. While there is often a negative connotation surrounding mental health issues, what many people are not aware of is how common mental disorders actually are. Research shows that one out of five adults is expected to suffer from mental illness. That's 20% of our population. Yet sadly, only half of these people will receive treatment. It's crucial that we reach a place where those with mental health issues are identified and treated just like someone with physical health issues. The consequence of ignoring mental health disease can be severe. So severe, in fact, that life is often on the line. Every 13 minutes, someone in the United States commits suicide, and 90% of those suicides will be due to mental illness. One reason the stigma surrounding mental illness still exists might be the fact that a large percentage of crime in the United States is due to mental illness. Every year, 2 million people with mental illness are sent to prison, making our correctional facilities the largest providers of mental health care in the United States. Our criminal justice system is not and was never designed to give individuals with mental illness the treatment necessary to better their lives and to improve overall public safety. This is why I'm co-sponsoring the Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act of 2015. This legislation will give correctional facilities the capability to identify and screen mental illness, assess and provide the clinical, medical, and social needs of inmates, and give appropriate treatment and services to those in need. Additionally, it will allow correctional facilities to develop and implement post-release transition plans for those suffering from mental illness. If policy makers, health providers, and law enforcement officials can come together with solutions to help those with mental illness, rather than look away, we have the potential for a healthier and safer society. It's time we make mental health a priority. Thanks for listening. For more information, visit www.fema.gov

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