

**NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
OF PSYCHIATRIC
HEALTH SYSTEMS**

ADVOCATING FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

900 17th Street, NW, Suite 420, Washington, DC 20006-2507 | Ph 202/393-6700 | Fx 202/783-6041 | naphs@naphs.org | www.naphs.org

June 23, 2015

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Hatch and Wyden:

On behalf of the more than 800 member organizations of the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS), I am writing to thank you for your support of S.599, the *Improving Access to Emergency Psychiatric Care Act*, a bipartisan bill introduced by Senators Ben Cardin, Pat Toomey, and Susan Collins. The legislation has 13 cosponsors. This legislation would extend the current Medicaid Emergency Psychiatric Demonstration for at least another year. The goal of this demonstration is to increase timely access to emergency psychiatric hospital care and to reduce backlogs in emergency departments.

Eleven states and the District of Columbia have participated in this three-year demonstration. The good news is the demonstration has helped hundreds of people with serious mental illnesses get life-saving inpatient treatment, while at the same time reducing backlogs in emergency departments and lowering costs. The bad news is that the demonstration has come to an end. Without an extension we are back to where we were prior to the demonstration – with patients backing up in the emergency departments and not getting the timely care they so desperately need.

This legislation would extend the demonstration for at least another year until the evaluation is completed in the fall of 2016, and it would require the Secretary to recommend to Congress whether the demonstration should be further extended at that time. This would all have to be accomplished in a budget-neutral way. This demonstration is very important, and it will ensure that Medicaid enrollees get the right care at the right time.

If I can answer any questions you or your staff may have, please let me or Nancy Trenti at ntrenti@naphs.org know.

Sincerely,



Mark Covall
President and CEO