

September 23, 2015

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
U.S. Senate
SH-703
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy
U.S. Senate
SH-136
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cassidy and Murphy:

On behalf of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and our 34,000 members, I am writing to express ACEP's support for S. 1945, the "Mental Health Reform Act of 2015," and to thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

For years, state support for mental health resources has been on the decline. As a consequence, services for psychiatric patients in the United States are simply inadequate. As a result of this diminishing support, psychiatric patients are more and more often turning to emergency departments for their acute care needs. Unfortunately, it takes three times as long to find an inpatient bed for a psychiatric patient rather than a medical patient after the decision to admit has been made. These psychiatric patients require more physician, nurse and hospital resources than other patients and, thus, diminish our ability to evaluate and treat other medical patients who are awaiting emergency services.

ACEP actively supports your efforts to improve access to vitally needed inpatient psychiatric beds and community mental health services. Your legislation will improve research, data collection and efficacy of existing mental health programs, promote evidence-based medicine to create systems of care for patients with mental illness, and encourage early intervention and prevention programs. Additionally, S. 1945 will remove regulations that currently prohibit the same-day billing under Medicaid for treatment of physical and mental health for the same patient, in the same location, on the same day; ameliorate the Medicaid Institutes for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion by giving states the option to receive federal matching payments for care of adult patients with mental illness; and establish federal liability protections for health professionals who volunteer at community health centers or behavioral health centers.

We look forward to working with you and your congressional colleagues to achieve swift committee approval of this critical, bi-partisan legislation and its enactment into law.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Gerardi, MD, FAAP, FACEP
President, ACEP

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE

2121 K Street NW, Suite 325
Washington, DC 20037-1886

202-728-0610
800-320-0610
202-728-0617 (FAX)
www.acep.org

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