

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies**

**Hearing Titled: “Mental Health Care: Examining Treatments and Services”**

**February 15, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Good morning. I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss a critical public health issue that too often goes untreated in our health system: mental illness.

Nearly one in five Americans has a mental or behavioral health issue that is both diagnosable and treatable. Yet only a fraction of these Americans receive the help they need.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, among the 43 million adults with any mental illness in 2015, less than half – only 43 percent – received mental health treatment. That same year, only 50 percent of children, aged 8-15, with a mental illness received the services they need.

Those suffering from serious mental illness often only seek treatment when in crisis and can end up in the emergency room because they have no other option. This lack of access is a problem regardless of whether an individual has health insurance coverage because, unfortunately, benefits do not automatically translate into treatment.

Over the past several years, Congress has worked to help mental health centers gain equal footing with traditional health centers by improving quality standards and offering patients services like 24-hour crisis care and counseling.

But until our health care system treats mental illness like it would treat any other physical illness, it will be difficult to reach parity. That’s why today’s health care system must do more to adequately treat mental illness.

Through the Labor/HHS bill, last year this Committee provided nearly \$3 billion in dedicated mental health resources distributed to every state in the nation. These critical resources provide infrastructure and support for communities to help treat mental illness and improve access to mental health services.

This funding continues research into better understanding and treating mental illness. And, it invests in capacity building to prevent youth suicide. We must continue to expand these efforts to create better access and comprehensive treatment for those suffering with mental illness in our country.

Mental health is not a partisan issue. I know Senator Murray agrees that ensuring access to mental health care is critical and an ongoing challenge for us to tackle together.

Today's witnesses have a broad range of experience in mental health and I welcome the opportunity to hear from them as we highlight this important issue. I hope our discussion today focuses on how we can improve access to care and treatment, learn what programs our experts think are most valuable, and better understand how resources should be directed to ensure that we effectively support states, communities, and individuals who are dealing with mental illness.

Thank you.

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