

November 2011

Honorable John Boehner
Speaker, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader Pelosi:

On behalf of the House Mental Health Caucus and Congressional Members who support the mental health community, I respectfully request and urge you to reject the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Bill (HR 3070) that cuts funding for mental health and addiction services, and supports –by a whopping 8.4 percent – a crippling, **irreversible cut** that would take years to recover from. This bill comes on the heels of funding cuts already imposed in FY 2011 and only further decimates critical programs that ensure a strong public behavioral health infrastructure.

It is shocking and deeply troubling that the House would single out behavioral health at a time when most states have cut funding for mental health care by nearly \$3.4 billion over the last 3 years. The brunt of the cuts to public health included in the bill would be borne by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In fact, HR 3070 cuts mental health funding by almost 25 percent-that would place their funding at the same level as nearly 12 years ago. The prevention portfolio at SAMHSA would be particularly hit hard at a time when the Institute of Medicine, in a 2009 report, declared that the prevention of mental health and substance abuse conditions among young people must be a national priority.

As we saw in the tragic events that occurred with the Arizona tragedy, we can no longer ignore the issue of mental health. The statistics serve as a constant reminder that more needs to be done to address this issue. America is facing a serious mental health crisis with suicide rates surpassing traffic fatalities and nearly doubling the number of deaths by homicide. With a record number of suicide deaths among service members, a growing number of young people facing mental health and addiction problems (half of those suffering from a mental illness will have the first onset by age 14), and so many Americans finding themselves homeless or in prison- this is one area where we cannot afford to make cuts. To do so, would only add to the already increasing problems that face our mental health system today. We are deeply concerned with HR 3070 and urge you to adopt more closely the moderate, balanced approach taken by the Senate in their bill. Should you have any questions or need further information, please contact **Ane Romero** in my office at ane.romero@mail.house.gov or x-5-5256.

Sincerely,

Grace F. Napolitano
Co-Chair
Congressional Mental Health Caucus