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May 1, 2013

Dear Representative McCarthy:

I am contacting you on behalf of the American Nurses Association (ANA), the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation's 3.1 million registered nurses, to express support for S. 689 the Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act of 2013 for increased awareness and treatment for mental health and substance disorders across the life continuum.

The tragic events at Sandy Hook Elementary last December highlighted the need for more mental health services in America. The deficiencies in the mental healthcare system are deep and systemic. Mental illness and addictive disorders cause personal, economic and social upheaval for individuals and families. Millions of Americans suffer from diagnosable mental disorders involving disabilities in employment, attendance at school, or independent living.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health in 2005, "an estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year.ⁱ When applied to the 2004 U.S. Census residential population estimate for ages 18 and older, this figure translates to 57.7 million people.ⁱⁱ In 2005, approximately 46.4 percent of the population was diagnosed with one or more disorder." Direct and indirect expenses, including long-term care, Social Security disability, lost productivity and health care expenditures reach into the hundreds of billions. Mental healthcare costs alone tallied \$135 billion in 2005, as stated in a 2011 Health Affairs article.

The increased attention after recent tragedies has led to a much needed dialogue of the restructuring of mental health services and research programs, in addition to funding for essential mental health research and service programs. However, as you consider possible solutions, please keep in mind that a 2006 study in the American Journal of Psychiatry concluded that patients with severe mental illness committed about 5 percent of all violent crimes. Mental illness often carries with it a stigma causing many with disorders to fail to get treatment.

The ANA applauds your desire to address this complicated, sensitive issue; and we look forward to continuing to work with you to advance this and other key nursing and health care issues during the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,



Rose Gonzalez, MPS, RN
Director of Government Affairs

ⁱ Kessler RC, Chiu WT, Demler O, Walters EE. Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of twelve-month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R). *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 2005 Jun;62(6):617-27.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates by Demographic Characteristics. Table 2: Annual Estimates of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 (NC-EST2004-02) Source: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau Release Date: June 9, 2005.
<http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/>