

Coalition of Disability Rights, Civil Rights, Education, and Privacy Groups Expresses Concern About Senator Cornyn’s Bill Linking Mass Violence Prevention to Mental Health Reform

Read the letter [here](#).

For Immediate Release:

October 23, 2019: A coalition of organizations including disability rights, civil rights, education, and privacy groups sent a [letter](#) to Senator Cornyn expressing concern about [legislation](#) he introduced today, the Restoring, Enhancing, Strengthening, and Promoting Our Nation’s Safety Efforts (RESPONSE) Act.

The letter applauds the recognition of the need for a federal effort to address mass violence, but expresses serious concern about focusing that effort on people with mental health disabilities. The organizations urge that mental health reform legislation be separated from legislation addressing mass violence, pointing out the clear evidence that mental health disabilities are not predictors of gun violence, and that only 4% of gun violence is committed by people with mental health disabilities. A [prior statement](#) from the coalition highlighted the damage done by the false portrayal of people with mental health disabilities as violent.

The letter also expresses concerns about specific provisions in the legislation, such as provisions suggesting that school-based behavioral intervention teams must report any student behavior that could have “potential criminal implications” first to criminal authorities rather than initiating an in-school process to address the behavior. The letter states the organizations’ willingness to work with Senator Cornyn to address these concerns.

“We believe it is urgent to address incidents of mass violence in our country,” said Curt Decker, Executive Director of the National Disability Rights Network. “However, those efforts should focus on real solutions rather than on mental health reforms that will have little impact on gun violence.” “Wrongly blaming people with psychiatric disabilities for gun violence sows prejudice and fear, undermining the opportunities for people with psychiatric disabilities to live, work and be full participants in their communities” said Jennifer Mathis, Director of Policy and Legal Advocacy at the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law (www.bazelon.org) is a national non-profit legal advocacy organization that advances equal opportunity for people with mental disabilities in all aspects of life.

The National Disability Rights Network (www.ndrn.org) is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems and the Client Assistance Programs (CAP) for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States.

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