

Bazon Announces Support for Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act

WASHINGTON, May 7, 2014 - The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law announced support yesterday for the Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act. The bill, H.R.4574, was introduced by Representative Ron Barber (D-Ariz.), with co-sponsors Representatives Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.), Doris Matsui (D-Calif.) and Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.). The bill puts the focus of mental health reform where it belongs: on the gaps in community-based services that cause many thousands of people with serious mental illnesses to experience crises, become homeless, or endure needless institutionalization or incarceration due to the unavailability of needed help.

The Strengthening Mental Health in Our Communities Act also creates a White House Office of Mental Health Policy and a National Strategy on Mental Health that would provide much-needed national attention to the challenges that our mental health systems have faced for years.

The bill reauthorizes and full funds the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program and continues to fund other important programs through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, including highly successful programs that make use of peer-run services.

The Bazelon Center applauds the bill's focus on expanding high quality, intensive community services and moving away from crisis-driven systems that afford people little help until they fail and then rely on costly and coercive interventions.