

Services for people with mental health disabilities under attack! Please sign on.

University Legal Services' (ULS') mental health program is on the chopping block for an 85% cut! Read how you can help! Take action now!

A bill has been introduced in Congress that would slash ULS' mental health program funds by 85% and severely limit our legally-based advocacy for people with mental health disabilities. Deceptively named the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act," the bill, H.R. 3717 by Rep. Tim Murphy of Pennsylvania, would dismantle the Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) programs operated by ULS and our sister organizations in every U.S. state and territory (i.e., the National Disability Rights Network), among other changes.

The undersigned organizations are requesting that Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton withdraw her co-sponsorship of H.R. 3717.

- HR 3717 would destroy the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program, a vital legal services program that has existed since 1986. The bill would slash funding by over 85% and impose severe restrictions on the minimal program remaining!
- PAIMI is a critical program that protects the lives of all District of Columbia constituents with mental health needs. If not for the funding and authority of the federal PAIMI program, Washingtonians with psychiatric disabilities would continue to be abused, neglected and warehoused in atrocious conditions without access to an effective advocate or legal remedy.
- With PAIMI funds, ULS is instrumental in ensuring appropriate treatment for constituents with psychiatric disabilities. ULS:

Provides direct legal representation to hundreds of District residents with psychiatric disabilities, and protects 1000s more from abuse and neglect by engaging in non-litigation group advocacy, conditions monitoring at psychiatric facilities, and class action litigation.

Helps homeless and disconnected D.C. residents access psychiatric and social services;

Assists citizens with mental illness returning to D.C. from jail and prison with obtaining stable housing, treatment, and employment;

Keeps families together by advocating for access to an appropriate, quality education and local support services for children with emotional disturbance.

- HR 3717 is an attack on the recovery model of mental health care that empowers consumers to take an active role in their care planning and decision making. The bill would eliminate evidence-based, peer-run services and supports that have a proven record of reducing health care costs and helping people stay out of the hospital and live successfully in their communities. It would gut funding for the District's mental health consumer networks that are vitally important to help people with serious mental health conditions stay well and recover.
- HR 3717 will make it easier to discriminate against people with disabilities in housing, education and employment, and lead to fewer individuals receiving the treatment they need.

Please DO NOT co-sponsor H.R. 3717! Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Jane Brown
Executive Director
University Legal Services