



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

I applaud Congress' recent efforts to mobilize legislation addressing the mental health crisis in the United States. Pope St. John Paul II said "Whoever suffers from mental illness always bears God's image and likeness in themselves, as does every human being. In addition, they always have the inalienable right not only to be considered as an image of God and therefore as a person, but also to be treated as such."

Those experiencing mental illness are among the most marginalized and underserved in our society. The Catholic Church through its parishes, charities and other ministries reaches out pastorally to those struggling with mental illness. Because the Catholic faith embraces an integrated view of the human person as both corporeal and spiritual, we welcome the sciences as one pathway to knowledge of the human person. We applaud additional funding for research to develop evidence-based programs to treat the biological and neurological dimensions of mental illness.

Further clarifying the designation of mental health block grants to provide resources to serve adults experiencing serious mental illness and children with serious emotional disturbance is a laudable step. Such measures help to ensure that those who have been pushed to the peripheries of our society in the wake of deinstitutionalization receive the services they need to function with dignity and freedom. We applaud the provision of additional funds to Assisted Outpatient Treatment, which has been shown to drastically reduce violence, arrest, hospitalization and incarceration of persons with serious mental illness. Empowering community groups, training police in crisis intervention, developing psychologists to treat those experiencing serious mental illness, and improving insurance reimbursement practices are steps that begin to draw people back from the margins of society.

Pope Francis reminds us that "*Compassion leads Jesus to concrete action: he reinstates the marginalized!*" With these words in mind, we encourage continued legislative prioritization of mental health care that embraces every human person as valued and filled with inherent dignity.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Archbishop of Miami
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human
Development