

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

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May 2, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member

Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the 9,200 physician members of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), I write in strong support of the nomination of Elinore McCance-Katz, MD, as the first-ever Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use.

AACAP was a major supporter of the mental health reform legislation that created this new position, and we are very pleased that a leading psychiatrist has been nominated to fill this key position at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). We are indebted to you and so many other fine leaders on both sides of the Capitol for embracing the need to create this new position, originally proposed and vigorously advanced by U.S. Representative Tim Murphy of Pennsylvania.

Dr. McCance-Katz has over 25 years of experience as a mental health professional and is board-certified in both General Psychiatry and Addiction Psychiatry. Dr. McCance-Katz's impeccable credentials include serving as the State Medical Director for the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Chief Medical Officer of SAMHSA, and she currently serves as the Chief Medical Officer for the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals.

AACAP strongly supports Dr. McCance-Katz's nomination and asks the committee to approve her nomination. At a time when the promise of significant reform of SAMHSA will depend on solid new leadership and a recommitment of its many fine employees to the goals of the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Reform Act of 2016," as enacted, we look forward to Dr. McCance-Katz's ensuring that the ill-considered approaches of the past are discarded.

It is essential that "the perceptible hostility toward psychiatric medicine," be reversed within SAMHSA under her new leadership, as Dr. McCance-Katz has written and observed first-hand in the past. We also strongly agree with Dr. McCance-Katz that the agency must not pursue "its own definition of 'recovery,' which generally ignores the treatment of mental disorders, and, as a major initiative under 'recovery services, focuses on the development of a 'peer workforce.'" It is our pledge to work with Dr. McCance-Katz, if confirmed, SAMHSA, and other mental health leaders in Congress, the Administration, and across the country to help prevent and treat all those at risk of or experiencing mental illness through proven methods, with medical-backing.

AACAP is the leading national professional medical association dedicated to treating and improving the quality of life for children, adolescents, and families affected by emotional, behavioral, developmental, and mental disorders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory K. Fritz".

Gregory K. Fritz, MD
President

cc: Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee Members