



April 25, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Alexander  
Chairman  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &  
Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education, Labor &  
Pensions  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Nomination of Dr. Elinore McCance-Katz

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing in support of the nomination of Dr. Ellie McCance-Katz to serve as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disorders. Dr. McCance-Katz is a Board-certified physician in General Psychiatry and Addiction Psychiatry and has more than 25 years of experience as a clinician, researcher and teacher. Her most recent position is Chief Medical Officer for the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals. Her work with people experiencing co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders will serve her well in her new role.

There is a well-documented need for significant improvement in mental health and substance use disorder care in our country. At a time of both opportunity and challenge, NAMI looks forward to working with Dr. McCance-Katz on improving access to care for the millions of Americans with mental illness and substance use disorders and for ensuring quality, effective services and supports that help people successfully manage their conditions and live full lives in their communities.

NAMI is hopeful that under Dr. McCance-Katz, priority will be placed on achieving the following three critical goals:

- 1. Improving early identification and intervention in the treatment of psychosis and other mental health conditions.** The NIMH RAISE studies show that Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC) services and supports in First Episode Psychosis programs result in better clinical and quality-of-life outcomes compared to traditional care. Further, the research shows that the sooner a person gets treatment, the better the outcomes. Fortunately, federal leadership has helped foster implementation of these effective, evidence-based programs across the country. NAMI hopes that efforts to spread CSC First Episode Psychosis Programs will continue and strengthen in coming years and, ultimately, change the course of serious mental illness for future generations.
- 2. Integrating mental health and substance use disorder care in overall health care.** For far too long, mental health, substance use and physical health systems have operated separately, with little coordination or shared care. The consequences have been costly and disastrous,

both for people with mental illness and substance use disorders and for people with medical disorders whose mental health and substance use disorders go unrecognized and untreated. In recent years, progress toward integration of care has been made, but much more is needed to ensure that people are routinely screened, assessed, and engaged in effective treatment, especially for co-occurring health, mental health and substance use conditions. We hope that Dr. McCance-Katz will continue and strengthen federal leadership in this area, as well.

- 3. Reducing tragic consequences resulting from inadequate mental health and substance use disorder services, including suicides, homelessness and incarceration.** Strong federal leadership is needed to promote collaborative efforts to reduce incarceration, homelessness and suicides by providing effective and timely services and supports. Coordination is needed between key federal agencies with responsibilities in these areas, including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Department of Labor, the Veterans Administration and others. In addition to coordination, significant effort is needed to promote effective, intensive interventions and to align financing of services in ways that promote wide implementation. We hope that Dr. McCance-Katz will play a key role in driving such efforts within HHS and other federal agencies.

NAMI appreciates the opportunity to communicate our support for Dr. McCance-Katz and looks forward to working closely with her on implementing these important priorities in the years ahead.

Sincerely,



Mary Giliberti, J.D.  
Chief Executive Officer, NAMI

cc: Thomas E. Price, M.D., HHS Secretary  
Elinore McCance-Katz, M.D.