



MAJOR CITIES CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

January 18, 2018

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labor/HHS and Education Subcommittee
Committee of Appropriations
2467 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labor/HHS and Education Subcommittee
Committee of Appropriations
2413 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, representing the 69 largest metropolitan law enforcement agencies in the Nation, I am writing to express strong support for recent congressional efforts to finance Mental Health First Aid training for local police departments.

Mental Health First Aid is an evidenced-based education program that helps the public identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness. From a public safety standpoint, officers trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of common psychiatric illnesses are in a much better position to engage persons affected by mental disorders.

For law enforcement personnel, the crisis de-escalation component of the training protects the lives of both officers and citizens experiencing psychiatric crises. In partnership with local community behavioral health organizations, the ultimate goal is to divert mentally ill persons who have come in contact with law enforcement from the penal system to active mental health treatment.

Both the House and Senate FY 2018 Labor/HHS Appropriations Bills have funding for Mental Health First Aid as well as committee report language directing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to train police officers, fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel.

Major Cities Chiefs thanks you for leadership and we look forward to full funding for Mental Health First Aid while also including congressional directions instructing SAMHSA to make local law enforcement agencies, fire departments and emergency medical units eligible for new training grants in the coming fiscal year.

Sincerely,

J. Thomas Manger
Chief of Police
Montgomery County Police Department
President, Major Cities Chiefs Association

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