Mental Health America Statement on Texas Shooting

Paul Gionfriddo, president and CEO, responds to the Texas Church Shooting and to remarks from elected officials that mental illness is to blame.

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (PRWEB) November 06, 2017 -- The following is a statement about the Texas church shooting by Paul Gionfriddo, president and CEO of Mental Health America:

"Yesterday, our country once again was faced with the horror of another mass shooting, this time while Americans were praying in a church in Texas.

"The president and others on Capitol Hill were quick to say this was not a gun issue, but a mental health issue. That's just talk that masks inaction on their part.

"In fact - this wasn't a mental health issue. It increasingly appears to have been a preventable tragedy - if public officials had been listening to mental health advocates for the past several years. Every time we have been asked to react to events like these, we have pointed out the obvious - that one of strongest predictors of future violence is past violence. This particular tragedy might well have been prevented if an individual with a history of domestic violence had, as a matter of public policy, been prevented or restricted from obtaining weapons to allow him to engage in more violence.

"To say that gun violence is solely a mental health issue is simply wrong. Most people with mental health concerns are never violent. That said, it is true that the mental health system in this country - the system on which the victims of this horrifying assault will now rely - is broken. Many people who need treatment for a variety of mental illnesses, including PTSD, cannot get it due to lack of access and affordability— and policymakers force too many to wait until a crisis stage before asking for help.

"If leaders of our country are sincerely interested in fixing our mental health system, they need to show it now. President Trump proposed this year a 20 percent cut in mental health block grant funding to states that directly impacts those dealing with mental illnesses. Congress spent countless hours debating inadequate health care proposals that would have dismantled Affordable Care Act protections for people with mental illnesses.

"Congress needs to protect funding for mental health for children and adults, not obliterate it. President Trump should put the power of the presidency behind adequately funding the system.

"The families of those who died and who were injured will be affected by this event for the rest of their lives. Long after the physical wounds have healed, the trauma will remain. It is critically important that we recognize and understand this, and do all that we can to offer the help and support that these individuals, families, and loved ones need.

"MHA will continue to work for prevention and early intervention services, for integration, for peer-to-peer services, and for all services leading to recovery; for protection of the essential mental health benefits people need; for parity protections; and for choices in care, services, and supports for people with mental health concerns. We sincerely hope that all of our public officials will do the same - and act before they talk.”
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