

Congressman Mikie Sherrill
Parsippany District Office
8 Wood Hollow Road, Suite 203
Parsippany, NJ 07054

3/1/2023

Dear Congresswoman Sherrill,

My name is Angelina Rivera, and I am a graduate student in the Social Work Program at Alliance University in Manhattan, New York. I am also a resident of Randolph, NJ. I am writing to you to encourage you to take action to help New Jersey increase funding in support of Mental Health Services and Initiatives in our communities so that increased access to services throughout our diverse communities can be obtained by our citizens. I am aware that the Mental Health Association (MHA) of Essex and Morris, received an award notice for a \$300,000 grant to support the youth suicide prevention services in 2022. This is amazing.

It is my understanding that the funding will be used for suicide prevention services that are designed to provide specific presentations on suicide prevention for schools, which will include a media campaign to increase awareness regarding mental health with information on how and where to find help. These services can also be provided to the greater community, including parents, family members, houses of worship, and colleges in Essex, Morris, Passaic, and Sussex Counties.

I am urging you to help us to increase funding so initiatives like this can be ongoing. Our communities are also in need of more Community Mental Health Centers throughout our cities, so in addition to people receiving psycho-education around suicide prevention, support can be provided to them by licensed Clinical Social Workers and Mental Health Practitioners and the community of Faith-Based Practitioners so that services and help can be received from a triad

of supporters. But we cannot accomplish this without proper funding, and this is where your help and leaderships is needed.

I would like to see your administration support the community of Morris and Essex and the adjoining communities in obtaining more grant funding so that programs like the PEWS Program (Promoting Emotional Wellness and Spirituality) which helps to educate members of the clergy, lay leaders and houses of worship to better recognize mental illness and how to link members to resources, while promoting emotional wellness by embracing the mind, body and spirit approach while addressing the stigma surrounding mental illness be made available to more towns and cities in New Jersey.

The MHA states that they educate members of our communities to recognize mental health challenges and how to link people to resources like: *family consultation, family support groups/ education workshops, community engagement and strengthen the role of the church in promoting mental wellness*. These are excellent programs and initiatives, but our funding sources have to be increased in order for these services to be ongoing and in order for them to reach our diverse groups in both the suburbs and in those densely populated communities.

It is not enough to read about these initiatives online or in the media but more importantly to see these initiatives erect physically throughout our cities. For the reasons listed above, I urge you to help us to increase the funding we need to increase Mental Health Services. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,
/s/ Angelina Rivera
Angelina Rivera