

Sample Letter

The Honorable (first name) (last name)

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Subject Line: Will you support the Cost of Mental Illness Act?

Dear (Representative) (last name):

I am writing on behalf of the Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance (**S&PAA**), a patient advocacy organization dedicated to saving lives by changing the treatment paradigm for all people affected by schizophrenia and psychosis spectrum disorders.

We are asking you to support the Cost of Mental Illness Act, HR7438, which would provide the accurate and comprehensive data required to design policy solutions that reduce the crushing cost burden of schizophrenia and improve the lives of the millions of Americans suffering from serious mental illness.

The cost of serious mental illness to America's healthcare, housing and penal systems – as well as those living with the disease and their families – is thought to be hundreds of billions of dollars each year. (One recent study estimated the annual cost of schizophrenia alone to be more than \$281 billion.)

But more comprehensive data are urgently needed to better understand and address these rising costs.

A key problem is that many people living with serious mental illness have gone uncounted, especially in hard-to-reach settings. It's estimated that 8-20% of incarcerated individuals and 4-20% of the homeless population have psychosis-related disorders.

Briefly, the Cost of Mental Illness Act would:

- Direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to conduct a two-year study on the indirect and direct costs of serious mental illness for:
 - Public and private inpatient psychiatric hospitals
 - Hospital emergency departments
 - Skilled nursing facilities
 - Family members and caregivers
 - State, local, and federal penal systems
- Direct HHS to conduct a national surveillance study every five years to collect the same information above specifically for individuals living with schizophrenia, as well as information on their demographics, average age of diagnosis, risk factors, and health status.

With your support, the Cost of Mental Illness Act will provide the usable and specific data needed to support local, state and federal policymakers in creating solutions that improve the lives of people living with the disease and those who care for them.

Thank you,

[Your name]