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ADVOCATES AND LEGISLATORS GATHER TO OBSERVE CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

Boston, MA. (May 7, 2015) – Legislators and advocates gathered at the Massachusetts State House on Children's Mental Health Awareness Day to draw attention to the difficulties children and their families face in accessing mental health and substance abuse treatment. The event, hosted by the Children's Mental Health Campaign (CMHC) and Representative Elizabeth Malia (D-Jamaica Plain) also focused on efforts being made to improve access to services for the 140,000 Massachusetts children living with a mental illness.

"Today we celebrate the progress we've made in expanding access to timely, appropriate mental health services for children. But much more work lies ahead. Families still face too many obstacles in finding treatment for their children," said Mary McGeown, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the host agency for the CMHC.

Leslie Voss shared her family's struggle to find proper mental health care for her teenage daughter, who spent many nights in an emergency department waiting for a bed to open up in an appropriate psychiatric setting.

"If you have a burst appendix, you don't have to wait for treatment," Voss said. "When your child has mental health needs – there is no direct road map as there is for most other illnesses. We were deeply disappointed by the limited mental health services offered by our health insurance."

Marylou Sudders, Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, was honored at the event with the Children's Mental Health Building Blocks Award for her work as a founding member of the CMHC.

"I am and will always be committed to eliminating the pervasive stigma associated with mental illness. Together, we must improve public awareness and education, ensure access to treatment, and provide support for families," said Sudders.

Representative Malia discussed several bills she and her colleagues have filed this session that would improve mental health services for children, including a bill aimed at preventing youth substance abuse.

"I call on my colleagues to join me in making children's mental health a priority this session," said Malia, who is the Chair of the Committee on Mental Health and Substance abuse. "We cannot leave children's behavioral health behind. The cost is too great."

About the Children's Mental Health Campaign

Formed in 2007, the CMHC is a coalition of families, advocates, health care providers, educators, and parents dedicated to the comprehensive reform of the children's mental health system. CMHC is led by five partner organizations – Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC), Boston Children's Hospital, Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Health Care For All, and Health Law Advocates – and includes more than 135 supporting organizations across Massachusetts. For more information please visit

www.childrensmentalhealthcampaign.org.

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