Thank you, legislators, for recent approvals and funding:

- Mental health coordinators in each school system
- Mental Health Crisis Centers and Mobile Crisis Services
- Positive changes in commitment laws
- Expansion of Crisis Intervention Training for first responders
- Expanding the Stepping Up Initiative to 28 additional counties.

Here are critical needs in our mental health care system and what our legislators can do to help:

1. **Our number one priority is for the public sector:** Critical shortage of public and private mental health care providers at all levels.
   - Increase state funding for AL Medicaid and AL Department of Mental Health to provide competitive reimbursement levels to Mental Health Centers and Crisis Care Centers.
   - Change the scope of psychiatric nurse practitioners’ practice to allow them to practice without restrictions. (This is a no-cost way to increase psychiatric workforce and retain them in Alabama as many move to other states where their practice is not restricted.)

2. **Critical shortage of public and private inpatient beds for children, adolescents, adults.**
   - Alter Certificate of Need restrictions to hospitals to add psychiatric beds.

3. **Expand Medicaid**
   - Expand Medicaid so that low-income individuals in the coverage gap have access to mental health care treatment.
   - Support a 988-user fee like the existing 911 user fee to properly fund the system so temporary support and referral to Crisis Care Centers is available.

4. **Staffing pipeline for MH professionals is drying up.**
   - Funding is needed to offer grants and scholarships for students willing to enter mental health fields.
   - Student loan forgiveness should be offered for those willing to serve a given number of years in the community mental health settings. (NAMI-Birmingham established the Doug Miller Family Scholarship in 2022 and awarded it to a nursing student who plans to work in community mental health.)

5. **Put an accountability system in place using key quantifiable measures.** Tracking should demonstrate if projects/programs funded by the state are getting expected results.

If our Legislature fails to pay attention to critically needed mental health issues each year and/or influence the needed changes, our mental health care system is in danger of collapse. **Please help.**

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