



**Joint Statement Regarding**  
**S. 2002, THE MENTAL HEALTH AND**  
**SAFE COMMUNITIES ACT OF 2015**



Prepared for the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing:

“Breaking the Cycle: Mental Health and the Justice System”

February 10, 2016

We applaud Congressional action to improve mental health services and programs for those entering and leaving the criminal justice system, and to improve access to data, training and resources that will support the ability of law enforcement, schools and others to respond to mental health crisis and substance abuse. For too long, law enforcement and criminal justice agencies have been expected and relied on to serve as the de facto mental health responders and service providers in our communities, while lacking the resources and tools to effectively solve the problems.

While we strongly support the mental health provisions of S. 2002 and Congressional action in this area generally, we must express our serious concerns with various provisions of the bill’s Title III, including more than one provision that will effectively make it easier for those who may be at risk of violent behavior to purchase firearms, and a provision that will require the removal of data from NICS regarding individuals who have been previously found to be mentally incompetent and therefore are currently prohibited from purchasing firearms. We should be strengthening our background check system and processes, not weakening it. Additionally, while we are encouraged to see provisions that appear to be supporting the rights of our veterans, we must ensure that efforts to provide relief from disabilities promote fairness and equity for all and are capable of being implemented in effective and sustainable ways, including the provision of the necessary funding to implement such provisions.

We urge the removal of the dangerous provisions of Title III from this bill and pledge our support in helping to develop more sensible legislation, including a more comprehensive relief from disability process to ensure fairness, equal treatment and due process for everyone. The mental health aspects of the bill are worthy of serious consideration and we support these efforts along with the efforts to ensure that our veterans and others are provided with the services they need to continue to lead productive lives.

**About the Police Foundation**

The Police Foundation’s mission is to advance policing through innovation and science. It is the oldest nationally-known, non-profit, non-partisan, and non-membership-driven organization dedicated to improving America’s most noble profession – policing.

**About the Major City Chiefs Association**

MCCA is a professional association of Chiefs and Sheriffs representing the largest cities in the United States, Canada and the UK. MCCA membership is comprised of Chiefs and Sheriffs of the sixty-six largest law enforcement agencies in the United States, nine largest in Canada and one in the UK. They serve 82.5 million people (69.5 US - 10.5 Canada - 2.5 UK) with a sworn workforce of 190,402 (161,664 US, 20,506 Canada, 8232 UK) officers and non-sworn personnel.

For additional information, contact the Police Foundation at 202-833-1460.