



CLAAD

**Center for Lawful Access
and Abuse Deterrence**

February 28, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Recommendation for Health and Human Services Assistant Secretary for Mental Health

Dear President Trump:

The Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence (CLAAD) recommends the Honorable Steven Leifman for Assistant Secretary for Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). CLAAD is a not-for-profit organization that works to reduce prescription drug abuse and its consequences while advancing consumer access to high-quality health care.

The HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health will play a crucial role in addressing our nation's complex mental health and substance use issues, including the opioid and heroin overdose crisis, which resulted in 52,404 overdose deaths in 2015. Moreover, the right person for the job could have a major positive impact at the national level by implementing a crucial criminal justice reform: providing mental health and substance use treatment to incarcerated individuals. Access to treatment in the criminal justice system is proven to reduce both costs and recidivism.¹

Judge Leifman possesses the knowledge and experience necessary to improve access to treatment for all Americans with mental health and substance use disorders, including incarcerated individuals, and he has a sterling reputation among CLAAD's coalition members. In 2000, Judge Leifman created the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Criminal Mental Health Project, which diverts people with mental illnesses into treatment programs. He presently chairs the Florida Supreme Court's Task Force on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Issues in the Court. Judge Leifman has rightly received numerous awards for his work to emphasize treatment over incarceration for the mentally ill, including the William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, presented by Chief Justice John Roberts.

Once again, we encourage you to nominate Judge Leifman for HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health. Thank you for taking our recommendation into consideration. Please contact us if we may provide additional input to you and your administration on matters of public health and safety.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Barnes
Chairman

¹ <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/frequently-asked-questions/drug-addiction-treatment-worth-its-cost>