

June 11, 2013

The President

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am the Public Administrator for a first class county located in the middle of the State of Missouri. I was sworn in to office my first time, January 2009, and successful won my second term in November 2012. As the Public Administrator of Boone County, I am assigned custodial and administrative responsibility for the estates of deceased persons and the persons and estates of minors and incapacitated or disabled persons when there is no legal guardian or conservator or when no one competent to assume such duties is known or can be found. When ordered by the Circuit Court of Boone County to assume such duties, my job provides for the proper care of the person and protects the assets of an estate against injury, waste, theft, or loss.

In 2012 at our State Conference held for Public Administrators, I was honored by my peers and elected to serve as the Vice-President of the Missouri Association of Public Administrators (MAPA) board. MAPA's board oversees 112 Public Administrators that make up the 114 counties in Missouri. In addition, Mr. President, I will be serving as the President of MAPA in April 2014, where I hope to lead MAPA into being the most vocal representatives for the mentally ill across our state.

I am writing to you, Mr. President, because I read about the Mental Health Conference you held recently and I was especially impressed to have heard you say "your hopes of working together to reduce stigma and help the millions of Americans struggling with mental health problems" Currently, I have approximately 412 active cases assigned to my caseload and 390 of those cases are people who are wards of the court. In other words, they are citizens who have been found to be incapacitated and/or disabled and can no longer make good decisions for themselves. At least 97% of the 390 incapacitated/disabled citizens I serve have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder sometimes compounded by a drug and alcohol problem. I feel the Public Administrators of the State of Missouri can help you get your message across about the mentally ill and help in educating the public regarding the unfair stigma that is attached with their diagnoses.

I believe, Mr. President, it would be in all of our interests if MAPA was included in helping with the education to our citizens regarding the mentally ill. Our knowledge is vast and our dedication in helping the mentally ill runs very deep. We have connections with many health facilities, hospitals and nursing homes. We depend on community support facilities where caseworkers help us with our duties as guardian/conservators and we work with the community in finding ways to help the mentally ill procure financial care so their physical needs that are no longer met by Medicaid can still be obtained.

Thank you for your time, Mr. President, and for what you are doing to make America a better place. May God's speed be with you in the remaining months you serve as President of the United States of America.

Most Respectfully,

Cathy D. Richards, M.Ed.  
Boone County Public Administrator

cc/ The Honorable Governor of the State of Missouri, Jay Nixon

File Copy