



Eastern Regional Conference

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

RESOLUTION #AG2018-01

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF STATE AND FEDERAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS RURAL MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

WHEREAS, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the suicide rate of people working in agriculture higher than other occupations, and nearly five times higher than the general population, with even veterinarians having a suicide rate 1.6 times greater suicide rate than the general population; and

WHEREAS, according to the CDC there are many causes of the high suicide rate among agriculture workers, including social isolation, potential for financial losses, barriers to and unwillingness to seek mental health services (which might be limited in rural areas), and access to lethal means; and

WHEREAS, difficult economic conditions are placing additional strain on our nation's farmers, ranchers and their families with projections showing that net farm income will fall once again in 2018; and

WHEREAS, according to the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018 median farm income is projected to be a negative \$1,316; and

WHEREAS, today's suicide rates for male farmers are 50 percent higher than they were during the 1980s; and

WHEREAS, telephone hotline and state crisis centers have been critical to reducing incidences of farmer suicide, and legislation supporting funding for rural mental health efforts have been included in previous Farm Bills, but left unfunded;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Eastern Regional Conference (ERC) urges state legislators to review the rural mental health programs and funding available in their states; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ERC urge Congress to increase funding to the Institutes of Mental Health and target appropriations to rural mental health and suicide prevention programs; and

Senator James Seward, NY, *Co-Chair*
Assemblyman Michael Benedetto, NY, *Co-Chair*
Wendell M. Hannaford, *Director*

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress urge the USDA, through the Office of Rural Development, to increase its efforts on rural mental health and suicide prevention; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be submitted to the appropriate state and federal officials.