

The National Council on Alcoholism directly speaks for nearly 11,000 U.S. citizens who are involved in its programs and vitally concerned about the prevention and control of alcoholism. The council represents a unique citizen response to this problem, and has been leading the attack against this disease for 23 years.

This national voluntary health organization, concerned as it is with the third largest public health problem of modern times, also seeks to change community attitudes toward alcoholism and the alcoholic. Long regarded as a personal and moral problem, alcoholism has only in recent times been recognized as a major medical and social problem affecting a broad spectrum of health, welfare and social areas of concern.

The National Council on Alcoholism, through its programs of public and professional education, attempts to bring a message of hope and help to the community regarding alcoholism. The basic points of this message are: alcoholism is a disease; it can be treated successfully; it is a public health problem and a public responsibility.

The affiliates of the National Council on Alcoholism have ongoing programs of public education which are reaching increasing numbers of citizens where they live. Affiliates also sponsor professional seminars for physicians, nurses, social workers, and other professional persons to enable them to deal more effectively with alcoholics whom they see in the course of their regular work. These activities comprise the portion of the National Council on Alcoholism's program which is intended to transform public and professional attitudes toward alcoholism, thus making it easier for the alcoholic to seek and accept treatment.

In addition, each affiliate of the National Council on Alcoholism maintains an alcoholism information center which serves as neutral ground for alcoholics and their families to obtain information concerning alcoholism, and which makes referral to treatment resources and facilities. Because our local voluntary councils on alcoholism have of necessity, in some places, had to fill the vacuum created by a lack of community facilities for the treatment and rehabilitation of alcoholics, we are particularly concerned that this legislation be approved by the Congress.

The establishment of specialized facilities for alcoholics as provided in title III, part A, H.R. 15758 is a major contribution toward creation of a comprehensive community attack on the problem of alcoholism.

As president of the National Council on Alcoholism, I commend the members of this subcommittee and the leaders of the House of Representatives for their concern for the health and social welfare of their constituents who suffer from, and are threatened by, alcoholism. I am happy to testify in favor of title III, part A, H.R. 15758, which, if passed, will insure that specialized facilities for alcoholics will be included in the Community Mental Health Centers Act. By this wise and humane gesture, facilities will be provided which will help advance the control of alcoholism in the United States of America.

I pledge to you anything that the National Council on Alcoholism can do in the way of support or the furnishing of any additional information which may be helpful to you.

Thank you very much.