# Dear Members of the Standing Committee on General Government,

One in five kids in Ontario experience a mental health issue. Approximately 18,000 kids are waiting to receive access to treatment. Everyone has a family member or friend, or friend of a friend that has experienced a mental health issue. No one is untouched.

The Province of Ontario’s hospitalization and emergency department rates are higher than the national average. Ontario’s children and youth have been suffering the effects of our deficient mental health and addictions system for too long. With long wait lists and wait times to access treatment being 18 months to over a year, there is a high risk of serious decline to their health and quality of life, and ultimately a high risk of death by suicide.

When young people reach out for help time is of the essence, and overall early treatment teaches skills to manage illnesses and challenges. Upstream intervention has the most impact and helps prevent young people from getting to the point of crisis. Early prevention is key to having full productive lives and reaching full potential. We should expect treatments for mental health and addictions to be accorded the same urgency as we do treatment of physical ailments.

Young people in Ontario are not the only ones feeling the effects of the deficient systems with long wait times and limited access to treatment. Their parents, siblings and other family members feel the direct effects. And, the effects trickle around to the hospitals and their workers, the justice system, colleges and universities and their students. In the short and long term, Ontario’s economy feels the impact in many ways, including productivity loss, as parents miss work to care for their children experiencing mental health related issues.

Ontarians need change and we need it now. It’s time for action. Let’s stop letting our children and youth, and their families down. Proposed Bill 63, Right to Timely Mental Health and Addictions Care for Children and Youth Act passed Second Reading with all-party, unanimous support on February 21, 2019, and was referred to your committee.

I ask you to be a champion and bring relief to children, youth and their families by removing the barriers youth face when finding services in our province. I urge you to actively support and call up Bill 63, Right to Timely Mental Health and Addictions Care for Children and Youth Act for study as soon as possible, so that it can move on to Third Reading promptly. Ontarians have been waiting long enough. Ontarians are suffering. We have lost too many friends, too many loved ones, too many people that deserve better.

Please do everything you can to ensure that this bill is studied and referred for Third Reading as soon as possible. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact information: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_