

September 11, 2015

Mr. Kenneth D. Cole  
Founder, Executive Chairman & Chief Creative Officer  
Kenneth Cole Productions, Inc.  
603 West 50th Street  
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Cole:

As experts in mental health, we were dismayed to see your new billboard linking access to mental health care to gun control. While many of the statements in your ad were correct, they linked violence and mental illness in a way that stigmatizes people with mental health issues.

The facts are clear: Most violent acts are committed by people who are not mentally ill, and the vast majority of people with mental illnesses are not violent. In fact, people with mental illness are more than twice as likely to be the victims of violence as the general public. Depending on the type of violent crime, prevalence was 6 to 23 times greater among persons with serious mental illness than among the general population. (1,2)

You are absolutely correct that many Americans with mental health issues don't get the help they need. Only 38 percent of adults with mental illness receive treatment. The right answer is to get people treatment, not to marginalize them. Stigma about mental health is one of the biggest barriers preventing people from seeking care, and your billboard unfortunately adds to that stigma.

We urge you to take down this billboard and reduce the harm being done to those with mental illness.

American Psychiatric Association  
New York State Psychiatric Association  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent  
Psychiatry  
American Academy of Community Psychiatry  
American Association for Emergency  
Psychiatry  
American Association of Psychiatric  
Administrators  
American Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society of Adolescent Medicine

Anxiety and Depression Association  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral  
Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Association of Family Psychiatrists  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Mental Health America  
Michigan Psychiatric Society  
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent  
Health  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Disability Rights Network  
NHMH - No Health without Mental Health  
Southern Psychiatric Association

#### Citations

1. Desmarais SL, Van Dorn RA, Johnson KL, Grimm KJ, Douglas KS, Swartz MS. Community violence perpetration and victimization among adults with mental illnesses. *Am J Public Health*. 2014 Dec;104(12):2342-9. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2013.301680. Epub 2014 Feb 13.
2. Teplin LA, McClelland GM, Abram KM, Weiner DA. Crime victimization in adults with severe mental illness: comparison with the National Crime Victimization Survey. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2005 Aug;62(8):911-21. Free full text is here if you want to review their specific findings: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.lip.hscf.ufl.edu/pmc/articles/PMC1389236/>