

Mental Health Liaison Group

January 24, 2007

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Collins and Harkin:

The undersigned organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group are pleased to write in support of your legislation, the Keeping Families Together Act.

As you well know, the custody relinquishment problem is exacerbated by the growing number of families that are either uninsured or under-insured with minimal coverage for mental health care. Intensive services to treat mental health problems are very costly and often not covered by private insurance. In many instances, these families are not eligible for Medicaid because of income. This leaves parents unable to afford the specialized care for their children. As a result, many parents turn to the child welfare or juvenile justice system for assistance. Yet neither system is intended nor equipped to care for a child with a serious mental disorder. Custody relinquishment of a child solely to access necessary mental health services and supports is a horrific national problem.

This important legislation responds to the growing crisis in children's mental health by addressing a fragmented service system. The Keeping Families Together Act will provide grants to states to establish interagency systems of care for children and adolescents with serious mental and emotional disorders. Additionally, this legislation will establish a federal interagency task force to examine mental health issues in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

We commend you for your ongoing leadership on children's mental health policy. We look forward to working with you to enact this important legislation at the earliest possible time.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychotherapy Association

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Laurel Stine, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 1101 15th Street, NW, #1212, Washington, DC 20005

American Occupational Therapy Association
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Mental Health America
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
Tourette Syndrome Association
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
United Jewish Communities
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

Mental Health Liaison Group

January 24, 2007

Honorable Jim Ramstad
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Pete Stark
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives:

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