

# Mental Health Liaison Group

March 3, 2005

The Honorable Jeff Bingaman  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Senator Bingaman and Representative Kennedy:

The undersigned national organizations are writing to express our support for legislation you are sponsoring, the Child Health Care Crisis Relief Act. This important legislation will address the national shortage of children's mental health professionals, including school-based professionals, by encouraging more individuals to enter these critical fields.

The Surgeon General estimates that over 13.7 million children and adolescents are in need of treatment for emotional and behavioral disorders but less than 20% ever receive it. After the option of early intervention is lost, the possibilities for a lifetime cycle of difficulties from unresolved mental health issues looms ahead: school failure, substance abuse, job and relationship instability, and even the possibility of entering the criminal justice system.

One of the key barriers to treatment is the shortage of available specialists trained in the identification, diagnosis and treatment of children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders. Primary care providers report seeing a large number of children and youth with mental health problems, but have difficulty finding available clinicians to take referrals. The Surgeon General reported in 1999 that "there is a dearth of child psychiatrists, appropriately trained clinical child psychologists, or social workers." The shortage of children's mental health professionals has also been recognized by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, the Council on Graduate Medical Education and the state mental health commissioners.

Enactment of the Child Health Care Crisis Relief Act will help remove one of the main barriers to treatment for children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders through the creation of educational incentives and federal support for children's mental health training programs. It will authorize scholarships, loan repayment programs, training grants, and specialty training program support. Children's mental health professionals covered under the bill include child and adolescent psychiatrists, child psychologists, school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, psychiatric nurses, social workers, marriage and family therapists and professional counselors.

Thank you for your continued leadership on mental health issues. We look forward to working with you on this important bill.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Pediatrics

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
c/o Peter Newbould, American Psychological Association Practice Organization, 750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry  
American Association of Children's Residential Centers  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association of Practicing Psychiatrists  
American Counseling Association  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Psychotherapy Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Children's Health Fund  
Child Welfare League of America  
Clinical Social Work Guild  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action  
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Mental Health Association  
School Social Work Association of America  
Society for Adolescent Medicine  
Suicide Prevention Action Network