

# Mental Health Liaison Group

March 11, 2011

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

Dear Representative Stark:

The undersigned organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group strongly support the “Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act of 2011.”

Despite the fact that effective treatments exist, Medicare’s current mental health benefit is not meeting the treatment needs of the millions of beneficiaries suffering from mental and emotional disorders. As representatives of the mental health community, we are heartened by your proposal to address these deficiencies.

There are numerous shortcomings in current Medicare policy that negatively affect beneficiaries requiring mental health treatment. Medicare beneficiaries continue to face inequitable coinsurance for outpatient mental health treatment as compared to the cost for other outpatient services (20%). Coverage of inpatient services in psychiatric facilities is capped at 190 days per a beneficiary’s lifetime. Medicare does not cover such important community-based services as psychiatric rehabilitation and intensive case management or service settings such as crisis residential programs, therapeutic family or group treatment homes, and residential detoxification and substance abuse treatment centers. Additionally, Medicare’s coverage of core mental health professionals is limited, reducing beneficiaries’ choice of provider and access to care. The unfortunate result is that most Medicare beneficiaries in need of mental health treatment are not seen by a mental health specialist.

Your legislation helps address all of these issues, and its enactment would make a dramatic difference in the lives of Medicare beneficiaries with mental disorders. Research has given us an unprecedented arsenal of effective treatments for mental and emotional disorders. Today, mental illnesses are as treatable as other general medical conditions. These treatments must be made available. Policymakers must take action to end the discriminatory policies in place -- in the Medicare program and elsewhere -- which work against individuals with these disorders.

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  
Laurel Stine, J.D., Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 1101 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, #1212, Washington, DC 20005

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We commend you for your ongoing dedication to ensuring Americans have adequate access to effective mental health treatments, and we look forward to working with you to secure the ultimate enactment of these provisions affecting Medicare beneficiaries with mental health needs.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychoanalysis in Clinical Social Work  
American Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors  
American Association of Practicing Psychiatrists  
American Association on Health and Disability \*  
American Counseling Association  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Psychotherapy Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists \*  
Center for Integrated Behavioral Health Policy \*  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU  
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies \*  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders -- ANAD  
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 Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Council on Problem Gambling  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Foundation for Mental Health \*  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America \*  
Therapeutic Communities of America  
Tourette Syndrome Association  
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

\* Not a MHLG member

