

Mental Health Liaison Group

June 1, 2005

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
The Honorable Susan Collins
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Clinton and Collins:

The undersigned health and mental health organizations are writing to offer our support for the "Positive Aging Act of 2005," S. 1116.

It is estimated that nearly 20 percent of those over age 55 experience mental disorders that are not a part of normal aging. While many older Americans experience depression, dementia, anxiety and substance abuse disorders, far too often these conditions are not recognized or treated.

Failure to treat these disorders leads to functional dependence, increased use of nursing homes, poorer health outcomes for other chronic conditions, and even suicide. In fact, older adults have the highest rate of suicide compared to any other age group. Studies show that 40 percent of older people who die by suicide had a visit with their primary care provider within one week of their death and 70 percent within 30 days. Knowledge about how to diagnose and effectively treat mental disorders is simply not reaching our front-line health care professionals.

Your bill is designed to make mental health services for older adults an integral part of primary care services in community settings and to extend them to other settings where seniors reside and receive services. The services under this legislation will be provided by interdisciplinary teams of mental health professionals working in collaboration with other providers of health and social services. Both the Administration on Aging and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration would be authorized to provide grants under this legislation.

Making mental health services an integral part of primary care services and enhancing access to them in settings where our seniors live and gather can dramatically improve the quality of life of older Americans. We commend you for your leadership in this area and look forward to working with you to achieve enactment of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Pastoral Counselors

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 of Practicing Psychiatrists
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Clinical Social Work Federation
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
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 Protection and Advocacy Systems
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 Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers, Inc.
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Mental Health Association
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
Tourette Syndrome Association

Mental Health Liaison Group

June 1, 2005

The Honorable Patrick J. Kennedy
The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Kennedy and Ros-Lehtinen:

The undersigned health and mental health organizations are writing to offer our support for the "Positive Aging Act of 2005," H.R. 2629.

It is estimated that nearly 20 percent of those over age 55 experience mental disorders that are not a part of normal aging. While many older Americans experience depression, dementia, anxiety and substance abuse disorders, far too often these conditions are not recognized or treated.

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