

# Mental Health Liaison Group

June 8, 2009

The Honorable Jack Reed  
SH-728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

## **RE: Strong Support for Reed Mental Health/Primary Care Co-location Amendment**

Dear Senator Reed:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) are writing to express our support for the Reed Amendment to the Affordable Health Choices Act. This important measure aimed at improving the overall health status of Americans served Community Mental Health Center (CMHCs) and other community-based mental health and addiction providers.

People with serious mental disorders treated in state mental health systems – a total exceeding three million persons – are confronting an emerging public health crisis. According to a recent study financed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), individuals with conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major clinical depression served by public mental health agencies **die – on average – 25 years sooner than other Americans**. The same SAMHSA survey of eight states explains these shocking mortality data by documenting a sky high incidence of co-occurring chronic diseases among this low income disability population including cancer, diabetes, asthma, heart diseases and cardio-pulmonary conditions of all kinds. At the same time, clients of public mental health service agencies have little or no access to specialty medical services or even basic primary health care.

The Reed Amendment directly addresses this public health emergency. By co-locating primary care capacity in CMHCs and other front line community-based mental health and substance abuse providers, the Reed amendment finances an integrated care model that facilitates access to needed medical services. We are also excited about the prevention and wellness activities in the amendment leading to better management of chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes and diseases linked to smoking.

Thank you for your extraordinary leadership. MHLG will fight hard to ensure that your important amendment passes.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Group Psychotherapy Association

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers

American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Psychotherapy Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Center for Clinical Social Work  
Child Welfare League of America  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Mental Health America (MHA)  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Association of Counties \*  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National Foundation for Mental Health  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance Association (SRDAA) \*  
Suicide Prevention Action Network, a Division of AFSP  
United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA) \*

*\* not a MHLG member*