

# Mental Health Liaison Group

August 2, 2002

The Honorable Bill Young  
Chairman, House Appropriations Committee  
H-218 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Young:

As you prepare for mark up in September of the FY 2003 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill, the undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition representing the broad, diverse mental health community that serves men, women and children, and their families, **urge you to provide additional funding for critical mental health programs building on the funding levels secured in last month's Senate mark up of its bill.**

Although the Senate took an important step in restoring troubling cuts for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs proposed in the Administration's budget, substantial increases are needed beyond the 1.5 % increase in the Senate mark up for the Center for Mental Health Services in order to address the mental health crisis in this nation. At a time of double-digit medical inflation and debilitating state budgets, the federal government needs to step up in its commitment to support state and community mental health systems.

In urging that you make mental health a funding priority, we recognize that the Administration's budget has proposed (and the Senate has provided) modest increases for mental health services funding for jail diversion and homelessness, and increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). However, stagnant funding for the bulk of other programs at the Center for Mental Health Services cripples our efforts to provide mental health services to young people and adults and continues the recent trend to underfund an already overburdened mental health system.

We recognize the challenges you face to provide funding in connection with domestic security and pledge to continue to work with you to increase funding for mental health programs. At the same time, we believe that increased funding for mental health services is consistent with our critical national goals. The events of recent months have highlighted as never before that our mental health is as vulnerable to attack as our physical well being. A healthy America is a strong America.

Thankfully, the Senate restored cuts in current funding for one of SAMHSA's core missions – improved community mental health. Cutting cost-effective, evidence-based prevention programs, which can avoid far greater future public health costs, would only compound the mental health crisis we are currently facing. Adequate funding is needed in order to meet the current challenge of serving individuals with severe and persistent mental illnesses and children with severe emotional disturbances. Without additional funding, the mental health system is for

the most part unprepared to address such new mental-health challenges as the ongoing trauma of threatened domestic terrorism and the human toll on people whose lives are upended by the strains of unemployment and recession.

More than ever, we need your continued support and commitment to improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of mental health services through increased federal investment in federal mental health programs. **The Mental Health Liaison Group wants to work with you to maintain the Senate's effort to restore cuts in SAMHSA funding and to increase funding for NIH including the National Institute of Mental Health, but also to increase substantially federal support for community-based mental health early intervention, prevention and treatment services.**

Thank you for working with us on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP)  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)  
American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA)  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Children & Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)  
Child Welfare League of America  
Clinical Social Work Federation  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
International Assoc. of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services (IAPSRs)  
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)  
National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors  
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems (NAPAS)  
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 Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association  
National Mental Health Association  
National Network for Youth  
School Social Work Association of America  
Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN)

cc: The Honorable David Obey, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Ralph Regula, Chairman, House Labor, Health and Human Services, and  
Education Appropriations Subcommittee