

Mental Health Liaison Group

September 11, 2006

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

Dear Congressman Kennedy:

The undersigned national organizations are pleased to write in support of your bill, the Psychological Kevlar Act, H.R. 6003. This bill would be an important step to address the unmet mental health and addiction needs of military service-members returning from the Middle East. As you know, nearly 20% of returning service-members report mental health problems, and limited resources have impeded their ability to obtain treatment for these conditions.

H.R. 6003 proposes a highly efficient approach to reducing these problems by requiring the Secretary of Defense to develop and use prevention and early-intervention activities in order to detect and treat the earliest signs of mental health impairments and other stress related psychopathologies including substance use conditions. These activities would occur where they are most effective – in the theaters of battle and immediately upon redeployment out of theater. In this way, the early signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other stress-related psychological conditions can be detected and treated before they become more severe. This will avoid more costly extended treatment later and allow affected service-members to return to productive activities more quickly.

In addition, your bill would enhance activities for education and outreach about stress-related disorders, so that front-line superiors and other relevant personnel can identify and appropriately direct service-members having potential stress disorders.

H.R. 6003 also would require a research program within the Department of Defense to develop additional effective prevention and early-intervention need measures and treatment techniques, for which \$50 million would be authorized in Fiscal 2007 and such sums as needed in subsequent years.

Just as our service men and women deserve the best Kevlar body armor to guard against physical injuries in combat, they also deserve the improved psychological protection and assistance that your bill would provide them. We look forward to working with your office to enact this important legislation at the earliest possible time.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

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 Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychotherapy Association
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders -- ANAD
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 Mental Health Association
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
Therapeutic Communities of America
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association