

Mental Health Liaison Group

September 12, 2008

The Honorable Richard Durbin
309 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

The undersigned national organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group are pleased to write in support of the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act (S. 3311), important legislation that will assist colleges and universities in successfully attending to the growing mental health needs of campus communities.

In the 2006 National College Health Assessment, 43.8% of the 94,806 college students surveyed reported that during the past year they “felt so depressed it was difficult to function.” Additionally, one out of every 11 students stated that they had “seriously considered suicide” at some point during the previous year. Students also named depression as one of the top ten impediments to academic performance. Unfortunately, many colleges and universities are ill-equipped to address the mental health needs of their communities. The 2007 National Survey of Counseling Center Directors found that the average ratio of counselors to students on campus is nearly 1 to 2000- the recommended ratio being 1 to 1000.

To address such troubling figures, S. 3311 aims to maximize the likelihood that students who require mental health treatment receive it and to ensure that their problems not reach crisis proportions before services become available. To achieve this, the bill establishes grants to eligible colleges and universities to foster a comprehensive approach to campus behavioral health issues, including promotion of mental health, prevention of behavioral health disorders, expanding campus mental health services and mental health training, education and outreach, and developing and disseminating best practices to other colleges and universities.

The legislation also calls for the establishment of a national public education campaign, focusing upon mental and behavioral health on college campuses. Such a campaign would assist in improving the understanding of mental health and mental disorders, and serve to encourage help-seeking behaviors.

We applaud your work to promote the good mental health of America’s students through the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act and look forward to working with you to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Laurel Stine, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 1101 15th Street, NW, #1212, Washington, DC 20005

American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychotherapy Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
CHADD- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Emergency Nurses Association
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of School Psychologists
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
National Foundation for Mental Health
Therapeutic Communities of America
Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc.
United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)

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