

Mental Health Liaison Group

October 10, 1995

The Honorable Bill Archer
Chairman
House Ways and Means Committee
U.S. House Of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Archer:

The undersigned representatives of the Mental Health Liaison Group are writing to convey our grave concern over the highly discriminatory coinsurance amount imposed on outpatient treatment for mental illness under the new "MedicarePlus" Point of Service (POS or out-of-network) plans defined in the Medicare reform legislation (H.R. 2425).

In brief, H.R 2425 includes as a "patient protection" a specified payment "floor" which MedicarePlus plans offering point-of-service are required to pay as a minimum (at page 51 of the bill, starting at line 11) for patients electing to go out of network. This language has the effect of increasing the already discriminatory Medicare copayment for outpatient mental health services from a 50% copayment to a 65% copayment. (This provision is not changed in the Chairman's substitute).

This new "floor" -- which we believe will be the ceiling -- is unreasonable in that Medicare already requires individuals with mental illness to pay a discriminatory 50 cents of every dollar incurred for treatment in the outpatient setting. No other category of care is subjected to such a high copayment level.

We strongly urge that, as part of any "technical" amendments to your Chairman's mark, the onerous 65% copayment which is imposed on outpatient mental health services in the POS MedicarePlus plans be removed from the substitute amendment for H.R.2425 by striking the parenthetical clause after "70 percent" on lines 5 and 6, at page 55 of the substitute bill.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association for Partial Hospitalization
American Association of Children's Residential Centers

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

American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children
American Association of Private Practice Psychiatrists
American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work
American Counseling Association
American Family Foundation
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Clinical Psychopharmacology
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Cult Awareness Network
Family Service America
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of Psychiatric Treatment Centers for Children
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of Rural Mental Health
National Community Mental Healthcare Council
National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association
National Federation of Societies for Clinical Social Work
National Foundation for Depressive Illness
National Mental Health Association
World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation

cc: House Ways and Means Committee