

Mental Health Liaison Group

November 13, 2009

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Stabenow:

The undersigned organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) are writing to express our support for the Establishing a Network of Health-Advancing National Centers of Excellence for Depression (ENHANCED) Act of 2009, S. 1857. We commend you for introducing legislation establishing national centers of excellence for the treatment of depressive and bipolar disorders.

According to the National Institutes of Health, most people with mood disorders can be effectively treated via medication, psychotherapy or combined treatment. However, according to the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (2009), one-third of those suffering from mood disorder (4.8 million) do not receive treatment, either because they cannot afford it, do not believe it is needed, are afraid of societal judgment or do not know where to go for services. Additionally, identification of depression and bipolar disorder are missed approximately 50 percent of the time (Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine, 2007), and this diagnostic gap yields adverse outcomes.

Your legislation targets these problems by expanding depression centers of excellence with the goal of increasing access to the most appropriate and evidence-based depression care and developing and disseminating evidence-based treatment standards to improve accurate and timely diagnosis of depression and bipolar disorders. Additionally, the ENHANCED Act will create a national database for large-sample effectiveness studies and create a repository of evidence-based interventions and programs for depression and bipolar disorders, as well as utilize the network of centers as an ongoing national resource for public and professional education and training, with the goal of advancing knowledge and eradicating stigma of these mental disorders.

The ENHANCED Act offers a substantial contribution towards closing the gap between knowledge and practice of effective mental health treatments. We look forward to working with you to ensure this legislation is a key component in today's evolving health care system.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Art Therapy Association
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 Pastoral Counselors
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Clinical Social Work
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental 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 Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers, Inc.
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
Tourette Syndrome Association
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association