

Mental Health Liaison Group

December 7, 2007

The Honorable Jack Reed
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gordon Smith
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reed and Senator Smith:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express strong support for the Community Mental Health Services Improvement Act (S. 2182) and the Community-Based Mental Health Infrastructure Improvement Act (S. 2183). The provisions of these bills will have far-reaching implications for the health and well being of people living with mental illness and addictions.

This legislation is vital to the health and well being of people with mental illness, as evidenced in a 2006 report developed by the Medical Directors Council of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD). Their report found that people with mental illnesses seem to have the shortest life expectancy, and the highest levels of disability, among any other subgroup in all of American public health. For this reason, we are particularly pleased with the inclusion of provisions that would co-locate primary care, specialty medical care and substance use treatment services in Community Mental Health Organizations throughout the United States. In addition, your legislation would appropriate much-needed funding to support the construction or modernization of facilities used to provide mental health and behavioral health services.

Since the President's New Freedom Commission Report referred to a "workforce crisis" in the mental health and substance abuse field, we also support the personnel preparation initiatives contained in these bills. Both the new university-based training programs as well as additional student loan assistance will help community mental health programs operating in health professional shortage areas. In addition, the new tele-mental health and health information technology programs contained in your legislation will help address the twin goals of improving the quality of care and expanding access to behavioral health services in rural areas.

Thank you for your advocacy and leadership on behalf of people with mental illness and addictions. We look forward to working with you to enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association

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 Psychological Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Clinical Social Work
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Mental Health America
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Tourette Syndrome Association
United Jewish Communities
Witness Justice