

# Mental Health Liaison Group

December 16, 2005

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Finance Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Grassley:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group, we are writing to urge that Congress include in the final version of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (H.R. 4241/S. 1932) a vital provision to protect Medicaid beneficiaries' access to antipsychotic and antidepressant medications.

The Buyer amendment (Section 3105 of the House bill) protects the ability of patients to have access to atypical antipsychotic and antidepressant medications using standards that are similar to the protections of the new Medicare Part D drug benefit. The amendment protects patient safety by ensuring that restrictions on access to these vital medications are based on peer-reviewed medical literature and other scientific evidence, and by guaranteeing that patients have a 30-day supply of their preferred medication pending the outcome of any review. In this manner, patient safety protections will be an inherent part of states' efforts to contain costs through utilization management procedures such as prior authorization. This reasonable balance is crucial for patient care and safety in the Medicaid program.

This provision will help preserve an important aspect of the Medicaid safety net, which is crucial for the low-income individuals covered by this program who have nowhere else to turn for their mental health care. We urge you to support this amendment or alternate provisions that similarly require that standards of professional practice be employed to ensure that restrictive Medicaid formulary policies will not harm beneficiaries. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychological Association

American Psychotherapy Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Federation  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
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 Social Workers  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Mental Health Association  
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA  
Therapeutic Communities of America  
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

cc: Representative Buyer