

# Mental Health Liaison Group

June 22, 2000

Honorable Pete V. Domenici  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Domenici:

The organizations listed below, on behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group, are writing in support of S. 2639, the Mental Health Early Intervention, Treatment and Prevention Act of 2000. We commend you for introducing this legislation which addresses so many pressing issues in mental health policy.

The legislation includes much needed provisions to fight the stigma of mental illness and to improve awareness among teachers, emergency services personnel and law enforcement officials regarding mental disorders. As the Surgeon General's report found, only about half of those who have a mental illness receive mental health treatment, and far too frequently lack of treatment leads to suicide. The bill would also improve access to mental health care by improving the training of primary care physicians and the liaison between primary care and mental health practitioners.

We also applaud the much needed expansion of resources for services of proven effectiveness for adults and children who have the most serious mental and emotional disorders and who must rely on the public mental health and child welfare systems for care. We are pleased that the bill focuses particularly on integrated treatment for mental illness and addiction and on the needs of individuals who come in contact with the criminal justice system. The arrest and incarceration of adults and children with mental disorders is one of the cruelest outcomes of our inadequate service systems. Finally, we note that the bill authorizes a new commission to consider various important aspects of mental health policy.

This far-reaching legislation covers many aspects of mental health policy. The groups listed below endorse the bill and urge its consideration by the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. However, not all of our groups support every provision as currently drafted, and these organizations look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff on the specifics of the bill.

Once again, we commend you for your ongoing leadership on mental health policy and for introducing this comprehensive approach which follows up on many of the recommendations of the Surgeon General. We look forward to working with you on these extremely important issues.

