

# Mental Health Liaison Group

August 7, 1997

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The national organizations listed below, representing consumers, advocates, practitioners and providers of mental health services, wish to express our very sincere gratitude for your extraordinary efforts on behalf of children who need mental health care.

The passage of the State Child Health Insurance Program as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 represents a significant accomplishment. The bill will provide health care coverage to millions of children now without access to essential care. Thanks to your efforts, all plans will now have to include a mental health benefit which is at least equivalent to 75% of the value of that benefit in one of the benchmark plans. We believe that this will provide all children with at least a basic mental health benefit, and for many children, particularly in states which choose to provide a more substantial benefit, access to all of the mental health services they need. This is a tremendous step forward.

We are very gratified that the Senate once again approved an amendment supporting full parity for mental health care. By your having pressed the conferees on parity, the result is the helpful requirement that state children's programs must comply with the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996. Thus, discriminatory lifetime and annual dollar caps on mental health services are banned.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without your efforts and those of Chris Jennings, who was always available to us during these debates and whose dedicated efforts we wish to acknowledge.

On behalf of the children who will benefit from this legislation, we thank you for your commitment. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure nondiscrimination in mental health care coverage in the future.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation  
American Association of Children's Residential Centers  
American Association of Private Practice Psychiatrists  
American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
c/o Chris Koyanagi, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 1101 - 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work  
American Counseling Association  
American Family Foundation  
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Managed Behavioral Healthcare Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Association of Behavioral Healthcare Management  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder  
Child Welfare League of America  
Clinical Social Work Federation  
Corporation for the Advancement of Psychiatry  
Family Service America  
Federation of Behavioral, Psychological & Cognitive Sciences  
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
National Association of Counties  
National Association of Homes and Services for Children  
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems  
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 Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Depressive and Manic-Depressive Association  
National Mental Health Association