

Mental Health Liaison Group

February 1, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Speaker and Leader Reid:

The undersigned national organizations in the Mental Health Liaison Group urge you to move forward and pass health care reform legislation in a timely fashion. We hail the bills approved by both houses and ask you to complete action now on improving access to affordable, quality health care services.

Improving the mental health of our nation is paramount. Mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the United States for people ages 15 to 44. This population is also at a five times greater risk of a co-occurring medical condition, like heart disease, diabetes or cancer. Additionally, people with mental illnesses are two to three times more likely than other Americans to be uninsured. And tragically, adults with serious mental illnesses served in public mental health systems typically die 25 years earlier than the general population because of the high rate of co-occurring diseases.

Your leadership has been instrumental in moving two comprehensive health care reform bills through the legislative process. We depend on you now to enact a final health care reform bill to help millions of individuals, including uninsured and underinsured children and adults with mental disorders.

Thank you for advancing health care reform legislation that recognizes the mental and behavioral health needs of our nation. We are prepared to help you move health care reform to the President's desk for signature.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA.
American Group Psychotherapy 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 Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic 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
Center for Integrated Behavioral Health Policy *
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU
Corporation for Supportive Housing *
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Emergency Nurses Association
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Behavioral Health
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 County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol & Drug Abuse Directors
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
School Social Work Association of America
Therapeutic Communities of America
Tourette Syndrome Association
United Neighborhood Centers of America *
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association
Witness Justice

** not a MHLG member*