

Mental Health Liaison Group

March 18, 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 Speaker Pelosi and Leader Reid:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group are writing to express our vigorous support for your efforts to pass health care reform legislation. Our coalition hailed the bills approved by both houses last year, including the improvements to access, quality and services provided in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (H.R. 3590). We ask you to advance the mental and behavioral health needs of our nation as reform legislation moves through Congress.

As you may know, mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in the United States for people ages 15 to 44. Tragically, adults with serious mental illnesses served in public mental health systems typically die 25 years earlier than the general population because of a high rate of preventable co-occurring physical illnesses, such as diabetes or heart disease. These troubling statistics remind us of the importance of the following provisions included in H.R. 3590 that will help millions of children and adults with mental disorders.

- Health insurance market reforms that would prohibit pre-existing conditions exclusions and annual or lifetime limits, provide guaranteed issue and renewal requirements, and allow dependent young adults to remain on parental coverage to age 26;
- Essential plan benefits that include mandatory mental health, substance use, rehabilitation, habilitation, prescription drug and preventive services;
- Mental health and substance use parity requirement for exchange plans;
- Within the private health care system, integrating mental health into primary care with the establishment of interprofessional, interdisciplinary health teams to support primary care practices;
- Medicaid eligibility extension to individuals up to 133% of the federal poverty level, including childless single adults;
- Chronic care coordination fostered through a Medicaid state plan option allowing beneficiaries with one or more chronic conditions or serious mental illnesses to designate a health home, and permitting the designation of a community mental health center as an eligible health home;

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
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- Children's Health Insurance Program maintenance through 2019, with states continuing to provide services or offering a procedure to provide for coverage through the exchange;
- Long-term services coverage through the new Community Living Assistance Services and Supports national insurance program and Community First Choice Medicaid Option to help individuals with disabilities receive essential care at home or in the community;
- Workforce development through mental health and behavioral health education and training grants to assist providers specializing in and providing services to children, adolescents and adults and loan forgiveness to child mental health professionals;
- Prevention and wellness services through community transformation grants and enhanced services for special populations, including people with disabilities; ensuring that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration is consulted on the development of strategies pertaining to behavioral health and directing the Clinical Preventive Services Task Force to consider best practices presented by scientific societies in the development of clinical preventive recommendations;
- Strengthening Medicare through an extension restoring reimbursement cuts for psychotherapy services within the outpatient mental health benefit and requiring Part D plans to provide full coverage of six classes of clinically sensitive medications, including anti-depressants, anti-psychotics and anti-convulsants;
- Establishment of a National Center for Excellence in Depression, among other important provisions.

We thank you once again for all you have done for children and adults with mental health disorders through your health care reform efforts thus far.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA.
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology *
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
First Focus
Mental Health America
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
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 Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
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
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association
Witness Justice

* *not a MHLG member*