June 23, 2011

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Leader Reid and Leader McConnell:

As Congress continues discussions concerning a reduction of the national deficit, the undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group—representing consumers, family members, providers, and professionals—urge you to oppose any agreement that would significantly cut, block grant, or impose harmful spending caps on Medicaid.

We are fully aware of the unprecedented fiscal challenges facing our country today, and we realize that in order to mitigate those challenges and attain a measure of long-term financial viability, tough decisions must be made. However, we also recognize that these tough decisions can be made in a balanced and fair manner so as not to affect disproportionately the nation’s health care safety net. Millions of children and adults with mental disorders and other vulnerable beneficiaries, including senior citizens, rely on Medicaid as a lifeline.

Medicaid provides a full range of home and community-based rehabilitative and supportive services necessary for those with chronic and serious mental disorders. It is considered the bedrock of the public mental health system, comprising 52% of state mental health authority revenues. In addition, state child welfare and educational systems rely on Medicaid to provide mental health services to children. Moreover, many critical benefits such as prescription drugs, case management and rehabilitative services are optional under Medicaid—making them extremely vulnerable if deep cuts are imposed.

Studies have shown that low-income individuals receiving Medicaid need more mental health care than other populations. Ultimately, the needs of this population will be unmet without mental health coverage under Medicaid, and this failure might lead to such dire outcomes as increased rates of homelessness, incarceration, school failure, and suicide.

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
Laurel Stine, J.D., Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 1101 15th Street, NW, #1212, Washington, DC 20005
As a coalition of diverse national organizations, we stand ready to protect the integrity of the Medicaid program and work with Congress on proposals that seek to strengthen Medicaid by reducing wasteful spending, reforming payment and delivery systems, and creating other efficiencies without negatively impacting the well-being of beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Art Therapy Association
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Association on Health and Disability*
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Humane Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Clinical Social Work
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies
Corporation for Supportive Housing*
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
First Focus Campaign for Children
The Jewish Federations of America
Mental Health America
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Association for Children’s Behavioral Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders--ANAD
National Association of Counties*
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Disability Rights Network
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health*
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America*
School Social Work Association of America
TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups, Columbia University*
Treatment Communities of America
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association
Witness Justice

*Not a MHLG member