

Mental Health Liaison Group

June 25, 2002

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
SR-172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Benjamin Nelson
SH-720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Collins and Nelson:

The undersigned national organizations are writing to express our support for the S. 2570, the state fiscal relief legislation that you have recently introduced. The legislation would temporarily increase the federal share of the Medicaid program as well as provide temporary grants to give states fiscal relief and it will be of significant help during the current fiscal crisis. States will then not be forced to make deeper cuts in health, social services and even education programs.

Medicaid is an important source of funds for mental health care to low-income populations and people with disabilities. Included in Medicaid are low-income children and adults in need of mental health and alcohol and drug services, children in the child welfare system who as a group have very high rates of mental disorder, and children and adults on federal SSI disability benefits who require intensive ongoing services. For these populations, Medicaid funding of public mental health system services is crucial.

Medicaid programs are under extreme duress. As people lose jobs during the economic downturn, increasing numbers become eligible for assistance. Unfortunately, as the economy contracts, states also face declining revenues and thus have fewer resources with which to pay for expanding programs.

Some states are taking measures such as freezing the Medicaid budget, which will ultimately force the elimination of optional benefits and optional populations. Other states are forced to make enormous cuts in other priority programs, such as education, in order to keep Medicaid whole. All states will have difficulty finding enough funding for their social services obligations.

We very much appreciate your support and we look forward to working with you to ensure that swift and meaningful state fiscal relief legislation is enacted so that we may reduce the need for such cuts now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
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 Pastoral Counselors
American Association of Private Practice Psychiatrists

---www.mhlg.org---

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 Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work
American Counseling Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Clinical Psychopharmacology, Inc.
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Federation
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
International Society of Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurses
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders -- ANAD
National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Foundation for Depressive Illness
National Mental Health Association
National Network for Youth
Tourette Syndrome Association
Treatment and Research Advancements Association for Personality Disorder