Mental Health Liaison Group

June 8, 2009

The Honorable Jack Reed
SH-728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Strong Support for Reed Mental Health/Primary Care Co-location Amendment

Dear Senator Reed:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) are writing to express our support for the Reed Amendment to the Affordable Health Choices Act. This important measure aimed at improving the overall health status of Americans served Community Mental Health Center (CMHCs) and other community-based mental health and addiction providers.

People with serious mental disorders treated in state mental health systems – a total exceeding three million persons – are confronting an emerging public health crisis. According to a recent study financed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), individuals with conditions like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major clinical depression served by public mental health agencies die – on average – 25 years sooner than other Americans. The same SAMHSA survey of eight states explains these shocking mortality data by documenting a sky high incidence of co-occurring chronic diseases among this low income disability population including cancer, diabetes, asthma, heart diseases and cardio-pulmonary conditions of all kinds. At the same time, clients of public mental health service agencies have little or no access to specialty medical services or even basic primary health care.

The Reed Amendment directly addresses this public health emergency. By co-locating primary care capacity in CMHCs and other front line community-based mental health and substance abuse providers, the Reed amendment finances an integrated care model that facilitates access to needed medical services. We are also excited about the prevention and wellness activities in the amendment leading to better management of chronic conditions like hypertension, diabetes and diseases linked to smoking.

Thank you for your extraordinary leadership. MHLG will fight hard to ensure that your important amendment passes.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Group Psychotherapy Association

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Psychotherapy Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Center for Clinical Social Work
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Mental Health America (MHA)
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
National Alliance to End Homelessness
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 Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
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 Association (SRDAA) *
Suicide Prevention Action Network, a Division of AFSP
United Neighborhood Centers of America (UNCA) *

* not a MHLG member