

Mental Health Liaison Group

July 30, 2002

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health,
Education, Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6300

Dear Chairman Kennedy:

The undersigned national organizations are writing to express our support for The Health Care for Working Families Act, (S. 2639), to require that all large businesses with more than 100 employees fulfill their corporate responsibility to provide workers and their families access to health care – as most already do. We believe this is one major step toward guaranteed quality and affordable health care for all.

We recognize that the bill does not require the provision of specific benefits and will not guarantee the coverage of mental health services. Our hope is that the required actuarial equivalence to benefits in Blue Cross Blue Shield Standard Option plan offered through the Federal Employees Health Benefit Program will encourage businesses to design a similar plan that includes full mental health parity.

The burden of being uninsured in the United States continues to cause unneeded suffering and death. According to the recent report by the Institute of Medicine: “The quality and length of life are distinctly different for insured and uninsured populations.” Whether it is mental disorder, AIDS, cancer, heart disease or diabetes, the uninsured are left out and left behind.

Thank you for your continued leadership. We look forward to working with you on this important bill.

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 for Psychosocial Rehabilitation
American Association of Children's Residential Centers
American Association of Pastoral Counselors

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers

American Counseling Association
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Child Welfare League of America
Clinical Social Work Federation
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Employee Assistance Professionals Association
Families & Consumers for Psychoeducation
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
Tourette Syndrome Association
Treatment and Research Advancements Association for Personality Disorder