

Mental Health Liaison Group

November 19, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid,

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) strongly support the nomination of Pamela Hyde to be Administrator for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee has now approved this nominee and we urge you to confirm her quickly. The MHLG welcomes and appreciates Ms. Hyde's life-long commitment to behavioral health issues and her work for system transformation.

Since 2003, Pamela Hyde has served as Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Human Services Department. As a Cabinet Secretary, Ms. Hyde has worked tirelessly to improve access, quality, and accountability of health and human services programs for the residents of her state, and, as a consequence, understands first-hand the importance of integrating general health with behavioral health. This comprehensive, coordinated approach should help to better position SAMHSA with its fellow public health agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Resources Services Administration and National Institutes of Health.

SAMHSA will also benefit from her vast experience in both the private and public sector, as well as in health program management, work with foundations and health policy development. As with SAMHSA's two previous Administrators, Ms. Hyde has also served as a state mental health director.

The challenges for individuals with, or at risk of, mental illness have never been greater – a vulnerable population that dies, on average, 25 years earlier than those without mental illness; whose conditions have been exacerbated as a result of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression; and calls to the suicide hotline that have increased exponentially. At the same time, key opportunities have never been more within reach – bringing to scale evidence-based, efficacious treatment, prevention and early intervention options; assisting with implementation of mental health parity; and building service capacity with community and state stakeholders.

Given that SAMHSA is among the last of the public health agencies to settle on its leader, MHLG urges the Senate to confirm this nominee quickly. We need the complete SAMHSA leadership team to work with the Administration and Congress to meet the challenges and deliver on the opportunities.

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Julio Abreu, Mental Health America, 2000 N. Beauregard Street, 6th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22311

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists
American Counseling Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention / Suicide Prevention Action Network USA
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Psychiatric Nurses Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild OPEIU 49
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
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 State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Coalition of Mental Health Consumer/Survivor Organizations
National Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
Therapeutic Communities of America
Tourette Syndrome Association
US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
Witness Justice

cc: The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Richard Durbin, Senate Majority Whip
The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Committee
The Honorable Mike Enzi, Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and
Pensions Committee