

# Mental Health Liaison Group

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March 5, 2001

The Honorable Charles Grassley  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Edward Kennedy  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Grassley and Kennedy:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)— a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, families, advocates, professionals and providers dedicated to expanding the availability of mental health services and improving mental health care in America— are pleased to support the re-introduction of the Family Opportunity Act.

The hallmark of the Family Opportunity Act of 2001 (S. 321) is the removal of a barrier that so many families encounter when they earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, are without employer health coverage or their private insurance coverage has inadequate mental health benefits that prevents them from meeting their child's needs. This important legislation serves as a link to the comprehensive benefit of services the Medicaid program provides and will promote early intervention, ensure access to all medically necessary services and help restore family security.

Increasing access to needed health and mental health care is a longstanding priority of the MHLG. Therefore, we commend your bipartisan leadership and the sound approach your proposal takes in fostering access to a wide range of services and supports for children with significant health needs.

Too often we find that the service needs of families with children with serious mental disorders are not being met and obtaining adequate mental health coverage in private insurance plans is extremely difficult. The Center for Mental Health Services has estimated that two-thirds of all young people are not getting the mental health treatment they need. In some tragic cases, families are forced to give up custody of a child with complex health care needs to the state as an avenue to access mental health and support services for the child.

The MHLG looks forward to working closely with you and your staff throughout the legislative process to pass the Family Opportunity Act of 2001 this year. Thank you for your commitment to the health needs of our most vulnerable children.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Academy of Neurology  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors  
American Association of Children's Residential Centers

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

c/o Chris Koyanagi, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 1212, Washington, DC 20005

American Counseling Association  
American Family Foundation  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Mental Health Counselors 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 the Advancement of Psychology  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Child Welfare League of America  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Federation  
Federation of Behavioral, Psychological & Cognitive Sciences  
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders  
National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors  
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems  
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems  
National Association of Psychiatric Treatment Centers for Children  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Mental Health Association  
Tourette Syndrome Association

# Mental Health Liaison Group

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March 5, 2001

The Honorable Pete Sessions  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Sessions and Waxman:

The undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG)— a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, families, advocates, professionals and providers dedicated to expanding the availability of mental health services and improving mental health care in America— are pleased to support the re-introduction of the Family Opportunity Act.

The hallmark of the Family Opportunity Act of 2001 (H.R. 600) is the removal of a barrier that so many families encounter when they earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, are without employer health coverage or their private insurance coverage has inadequate mental health benefits that prevents them from meeting their child's needs. This important legislation serves as a link to the comprehensive benefit of services the Medicaid program provides and will promote early intervention, ensure access to all medically necessary services and help restore family security.

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