June 6, 1997

Honorable John D. Dingell  
Ranking Minority Member  
House Commerce Committee  
564 Ford House Office Building  
Washington, DC  20515

Dear Rep. Dingell:

On behalf of the Health Policy Committee of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) -- a coalition composed of provider, family and consumer organizations -- we are writing to express our strong support for the "Health Insurance Bill of Rights Act of 1997" (H.R. 820).

This measure provides essential protections for consumers in the private health insurance marketplace, while addressing extremely pressing concerns. For example, the legislation requires the development of quality criteria along with performance and clinical outcome measures for at-risk individuals and people with chronic and severe illnesses. If H.R. 820 is passed, this provision alone will have an important positive impact on the health care provided to adults with severe mental illnesses, children with serious emotional disturbances and other people with significant mental disorders who are increasingly being served in managed care settings. In addition, the bill assures timely appeals, reforms the utilization review process to require the use of trained personnel and guarantees access to emergency and urgent care services.

Given the history of insurance discrimination against people with mental disorders and the serious problems associated with the delivery of mental health care by HMOs, the "Health Insurance Bill of Rights Act” represents a critical step forward.

You have our full support.

Sincerely,

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  
American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children  
American Counseling Association  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Orthopsychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Association of Behavioral Healthcare Management  
Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Federation  
Corporation for the Advancement of Psychiatry  
Family Service America  
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services  
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of Psychiatric Treatment Centers for Children
National Association of Social Workers
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Mental Health Association

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Al Guida, National Mental Health Association, 1021 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314