

Mental Health Liaison Group

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
