

Dear Madam Speaker and Leader Reid:

The undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to give the highest priority to passing a strong mental health and addiction parity law this year.

Millions of Americans with or at risk of mental health or substance use disorders continue to experience health insurance discrimination because federal law still allows arbitrary barriers on coverage of needed services. Despite widespread support, legislation that would close the loopholes in the existing partial parity law by outlawing arbitrary benefit limits has been blocked in every Congress since 1999. As every year more than 31,000 Americans die by suicide and an estimated 1.4 million individuals attempt suicide, passing parity is a matter of life and death.

Finally, the parity logjam was broken in September by unanimous Senate passage of S. 558, a landmark bill supported by hundreds of health, social welfare and consumer organizations as well as by former parity opponents in the employer and insurer community. Broad support for parity legislation in the House has led to approval of H.R. 1424 by three committees of jurisdiction. This progress shows that Congress is poised to pass historic full parity legislation if policy differences can be resolved to produce one bill that is acceptable to both the Senate and House.

We have appreciated your longtime support for this issue. Please work with committee chairs and parity sponsors to pass strong parity legislation and send it to the President before the end of this year.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Counseling Association
American Psychological Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Betty Ford Center
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Caron Treatment Centers
Hazelden Foundation
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Social Workers