

Mental Health Liaison Group

Action Alert

www.mhlg.org

August 7, 2008

To: Mental Health Liaison Group Members

Parity Supporter Organizations

From: Peter Newbould, MHLG Health Policy Committee Cochair

c/o American Psychological Assn. Practice Organization, 202-336-5889

Laurel Stine, MHLG Health Policy Committee Cochair

c/o Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, 202-467-5730 x134

Re: Letter Supporting Agreement (Parity Alert #66)

Action: Add your organization as a cosigner of our new letter to the Congressional Leadership urging that the parity agreement be passed by the end of September. To cosign, send an email to Christie Lum at clum@counseling.org, with your organization's name and a contact name by COB on Friday, September 5th.

Text of Letter:

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi and Leader Boehner:

We are writing to express our support for the mental health and addiction parity compromise developed by House and Senate negotiators. We urge Congress to pass this important legislation before adjourning in September.

Congress has taken a major step forward in developing this thoughtful and balanced bipartisan legislation. We applaud the long, hard work engaged in by you and your colleagues in approving and reconciling the bipartisan House and Senate parity bills (H.R. 1424, S. 558). We urge Congress to take the last, most important step by passing this legislation.

Passage of the balanced and bipartisan mental health and addiction parity legislation would represent the fruition of many years of work by members of Congress, advocates, employer organizations and health plans to build on the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996. This broad and

diverse coalition stands united in support of the parity compromise. Now, Congress has the chance to reach the goal of enacting this consensus legislation, before a new administration and a new Congress take office, and broader health policy issues begin demanding policymakers' time and attention.

We ask Congress to pass federal mental health and addiction parity legislation now.

Sincerely,

The Agreement: When enacted the new federal parity law will—

- Completely end insurance discrimination against mental health and substance use disorder benefits for over 113 million Americans, requiring full parity coverage with physical health benefits.
- Extend to all aspects of plan coverage, including day/visit limits, dollar limits, coinsurance, copayments, deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums.
- Preserve strong state parity and consumer protection laws while extending parity protection to 82 million more people who cannot be protected by state laws.
- Ensure parity coverage for both in-network and out-of-network services.