

TO BE CIRCULATED AS AN ORGANIZATION SIGN-ON LETTER--LEADERSHIP

DATE

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
H-107 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

We the undersigned [190] organizations are writing to urge you to bring H.R. 1424, the *Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act* to a vote this session. We greatly appreciate your strong, vocal endorsement of parity legislation, and would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our own commitment to its enactment, and our hope that it can be given the priority we feel it deserves on the House of Representatives' legislative agenda.

This landmark, bipartisan legislation, introduced by Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN), would prohibit insurance discrimination against more than 50 million Americans suffering from addiction and mental illness. Parity of insurance coverage for mental and addictive disorder treatment is a priority that we cannot afford to postpone any further, especially because coverage for addiction and mental illnesses is at an all time record low. A recent Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) survey of 2003 private expenditures on mental health and addiction spending found that private insurance payments accounted for only 9% of total addiction treatment expenditures and only 24% of all mental health treatment expenditures.

We applaud the recent approval of H.R. 1424—by a strong 33-9 vote—by the House Education and Labor Committee on July 18, 2007, and the holding of two hearings on the legislation by the Health Subcommittee of the House Ways & Means Committee and the Health Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee earlier in the year. Legislation to bring full equity to mental health coverage has been introduced repeatedly in the House since the 107th Congress, but has not received serious consideration until now. We are concerned, however, that delays in House floor consideration of H.R. 1424 will decrease its chance of enactment and will only continue the struggle of children and families to access needed mental health and addiction treatment services.

Because of the critical nature of this legislation, we urge you to bring H.R. 1424 to a floor vote by September 17, 2007 should the bills not receive formal consideration in the Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means committees. Parity legislation enjoys strong support among House members, as demonstrated by the H.R. 1424's 268 cosponsors and the House Education and Labor Committee vote.

We stand ready to assist you toward the goal of achieving fairness in health plans for all Americans.

Sincerely,

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DATE

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chair
House Committee on Ways & Means
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Pete Stark
Chair
Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Ways & Means
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Rangel and Stark:

The undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to schedule a mark up of mental health and addictive disorder treatment parity legislation, H.R. 1424, the “Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act,” in the House Ways & Means Committee the week of September 4, 2007.

H.R. 1424 is landmark, bipartisan legislation to prohibit insurance discrimination against Americans with mental and addictive disorders. The legislation, introduced by Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN), has 268 cosponsors—including, we are pleased to note, yourselves. As you know, the bill was favorably reported by the House Education and Labor Committee by a vote of 33 to 9 on July 18, 2007, marking the first time a mental health parity bill has ever been approved by a House committee in the twelve year history of federal parity legislation. H.R. 1424 was also the subject of a hearing held by the House Ways & Means Committee’s Subcommittee on Health on March 27, 2007. We deeply appreciate Chairman Stark’s leadership in holding this hearing, and in championing mental health legislation.

The need for action on this legislation is shown by the fact that private insurance payments for addiction and mental health treatment have dropped to record lows. A recent Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) survey of 2003 private expenditures on mental health and addiction spending found that private insurance payments accounted for only 9% of total addiction treatment expenditures in 2003 and only 24% of all mental health treatment expenditures. Further delay of this legislation will only continue the struggle of children and families to access needed mental health and addiction treatment services.

We urge your committee to swiftly approve H.R. 1424 soon after Congress returns from its August recess, so that the legislation can be enacted this year. We need to make equitable treatment a reality for millions of Americans, and our organizations stand ready to assist you and your staff in any way possible to advance this legislation in early September.

Sincerely,

TO BE CIRCULATED AS AN ORGANIZATION SIGN-ON LETTER—ENERGY & COMMERCE

DATE

The Honorable John Dingell
Chair
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chair
Subcommittee on Health
House Committee on Energy & Commerce
U. S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Dingell and Pallone:

The undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to schedule a mark up of mental health and addictive disorder treatment parity legislation, H.R. 1424, the “Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act,” in the House Energy & Commerce Committee the week of September 4, 2007.

H.R. 1424 is landmark, bipartisan legislation to prohibit insurance discrimination against Americans with mental and addictive disorders. The legislation, introduced by Representatives Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN), has 268 cosponsors—including, we are pleased to note, yourselves. As you know, the bill was favorably reported by the House Education and Labor Committee by a vote of 33 to 9 on July 18, 2007, marking the first time a mental health parity bill has ever been approved by a House committee in the twelve year history of federal parity legislation. H.R. 1424 was also the subject of a hearing held by the Energy and Commerce Committee’s Subcommittee on Health on June 15, 2007. We deeply appreciate Chairman Pallone’s leadership in holding this hearing, and in championing mental health legislation.

The need for action on this legislation is shown by the fact that private insurance payments for addiction and mental health treatment have dropped to record lows. A recent Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) survey of 2003 private expenditures on mental health and addiction spending found that private insurance payments accounted for only 9% of total addiction treatment expenditures in 2003 and only 24% of all mental health treatment expenditures. Further delay of this legislation will only continue the struggle of children and families to access needed mental health and addiction treatment services.

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