

COALITION FOR WHOLE HEALTH

November 6, 2009

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
H-232 Capitol
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
H-107 Capitol
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer:

On behalf of the Coalition for Whole Health, the undersigned organizations are writing to express our support for provisions in the *Affordable Health Care for America Act* (H.R. 3962) that will increase access to mental health and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery support services for millions of Americans.

Specifically, we applaud the inclusion of the following provisions:

- The inclusion of mental health and substance use disorders in the minimum benefit package that all qualified health plans will have to offer
- The expansion of the Wellstone Domenici parity law to all qualified health insurance plans
- The expansion of Medicaid eligibility and mandatory and optional Medicaid benefits, including substance use disorder and mental health benefits, to all children, pregnant women, parents, and childless adults with incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level
- The inclusion of insurance reforms such as prohibiting discrimination against individuals with pre-existing conditions and prohibiting insurers from applying annual and lifetime caps
- Workforce development grants for providers of mental health and substance use disorder services
- Coverage of A and B recommendations from the Task Force on Clinical Preventive Services in the prevention benefit package for policies offered through the health exchange that will expand access to mental health and addictive disorder screenings for adults and adolescents
- Grants for substance use disorder and mental illness screening, brief intervention and treatment
- The inclusion of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in the list of agencies that will be consulted for the development of a national prevention and wellness plan

Medical experts agree that addiction and mental illnesses are chronic diseases that can be prevented and treated effectively. Unfortunately, less than half of the 15 million adults with serious mental illness received treatment or counseling for a mental health problem and only 18 percent of the 22.6 million people in need of help for an alcohol and/or drug use problem received any form of treatment in the past year. The above provisions are essential to remedying this treatment gap and increasing access to addiction and mental health prevention, treatment and recovery support services for millions of American and their families.

Thank you again for your leadership. The Coalition for Whole Health looks forward to working with you and your staff to ensure these provisions are part of comprehensive health care reform legislation that is enacted this year. If we can serve as a resource, please do not hesitate to contact Gabrielle de la Gueronniere or Dan Belnap at 202-544-5478, Carol McDaid at 202-737-8168, or Holly Merbaum at 202-737-7393.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (AATOD)
American Nurses Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine

Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Betty Ford Center
Betty Ford Institute
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC)

California Foundation for the Advancement of
Addiction Professionals (CFAAP)
Campaign for Mental Health Reform
The Carter Center Mental Health Program
Center for Health care Services (San Antonio,
Texas)
Community Advocates, Milwaukee, WI
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America
Cumberland Heights
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition
Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems, George
Washington University
Entertainment Industries Council
Faces and Voices of Recovery
Friends of SAMHSA
Hazelden Foundation
International Certification and Reciprocity
Consortium (IC & RC)
Legal Action Center
McShin Foundation
Medication Assisted Recovery (MARS) Project
Mental Health America
NAADAC – The Association for Addiction
Professionals
National African American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
National Alliance for Medication (NAMA) Recovery
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children of Alcoholics
National Association for State Alcohol/Drug Abuse
Directors

National Association of Addiction Treatment
Providers
National Association of County Behavioral Health
and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
National Council for Community Behavioral
Healthcare
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug
Dependence
NCADD-NJ
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental
Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
National Student Assistance Association (NSAA)
The NeuroDevelopment Center
Oregon Partnership
The Partnership for a Drug-Free America
Physicians and Lawyers for National Drug Policy
Rebecca Project for Human Rights
State Associations of Addiction Services
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA, a division
of AFSP
TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health
Checkups
Therapeutic Communities of America
Tourette Syndrome Association
United Methodist Church – General Board of Church
and Society
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
The Watershed Addiction Treatment Centers
Wellstone Action

Cc: The Honorable Henry Waxman
The Honorable John Dingell
The Honorable Frank Pallone
The Honorable Charlie Rangel
The Honorable Pete Stark
The Honorable George Miller
The Honorable Robert Andrews