

# American Psychiatric Association

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February 28, 2008

Dear Representative:

I am writing on behalf of the American Psychiatric Association, the national medical specialty representing more than 38,000 psychiatric physicians nationwide, to strongly urge you to vote to approve comprehensive legislation requiring an end to insurance discrimination against patients requiring treatment for mental illnesses (including substance related disorders), embodied as H.R. 1424 in the House.

Mental illnesses can and do have a devastating impact on millions of Americans every day. These illnesses reach across all ethnic, cultural, social, gender, and economic boundaries, impacting not only our patients but their families as well. Over 35 million experience disabling symptoms of mental disorders each year. The good news is that treatment works. Unfortunately, most American health insurance coverage does not cover the care our patients need at a level comparable to coverage for other health conditions.

It is long overdue for Congress to act to end this discrimination. Over the last eight years, the Federal Employees Health Benefit program has made "parity" coverage for mental health care available to Members of Congress and 8.5 million other federal employees. Implemented through 350 health plans throughout all regions of the country, research has shown that there has been no significant cost increase attributable to this enlightened parity requirement. It is time the rest of the country followed suit.

We urge you to vote for passage of H.R. 1424 and to reject any weakening amendments. This is a critical step in the process that will enable the House and Senate to send a final law to the President this year. On behalf of our members – and most importantly on behalf of their patients – we urge you in the strongest possible terms to pass this bill, and ultimately for the Congress as a whole to approve the strongest possible parity law.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Carolyn B. Robinowitz, M.D.  
President

