

# Mental Health Liaison Group

June 23, 2011

The Honorable John A. Boehner  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

As Congress continues discussions concerning a reduction of the national deficit, the undersigned members of the Mental Health Liaison Group— representing consumers, family members, providers, and professionals— urge you to oppose any agreement that would significantly cut, block grant, or impose harmful spending caps on Medicaid.

We are fully aware of the unprecedented fiscal challenges facing our country today, and we realize that in order to mitigate those challenges and attain a measure of long-term financial viability, tough decisions must be made. However, we also recognize that these tough decisions can be made in a balanced and fair manner so as not to affect disproportionately the nation's health care safety net. Millions of children and adults with mental disorders and other vulnerable beneficiaries, including senior citizens, rely on Medicaid as a lifeline.

Medicaid provides a full range of home and community-based rehabilitative and supportive services necessary for those with chronic and serious mental disorders. It is considered the bedrock of the public mental health system, comprising 52% of state mental health authority revenues. In addition, state child welfare and educational systems rely on Medicaid to provide mental health services to children. Moreover, many critical benefits such as prescription drugs, case management and rehabilitative services are optional under Medicaid – making them extremely vulnerable if deep cuts are imposed.

Studies have shown that low-income individuals receiving Medicaid need more mental health care than other populations. Ultimately, the needs of this population will be unmet without mental health coverage under Medicaid, and this failure might lead to such dire outcomes as increased rates of homelessness, incarceration, school failure, and suicide.

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Leader Reid & Leader McConnell  
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As a coalition of diverse national organizations, we stand ready to protect the integrity of the Medicaid program and work with Congress on proposals that seek to strengthen Medicaid by reducing wasteful spending, reforming payment and delivery systems, and creating other efficiencies without negatively impacting the well-being of beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Art Therapy Association  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry  
American Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation  
American Association of Pastoral Counselors  
American Association on Health and Disability\*  
American Counseling Association  
American Dance Therapy Association  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA  
American Group Psychotherapy Association  
American Humane Association  
American Mental Health Counselors Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Occupational Therapy Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
American Psychological Association  
Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
Center for Clinical Social Work  
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
Clinical Social Work Association  
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU  
Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies  
Corporation for Supportive Housing\*  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
The Jewish Federations of America  
Mental Health America  
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals  
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)  
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders--ANAD

National Association of Counties\*  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils  
National Association of School Psychologists  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery  
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
National Foundation for Mental Health\*  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America\*  
School Social Work Association of America  
TeenScreen National Center for Mental Health Checkups, Columbia University\*  
Treatment Communities of America  
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association  
Witness Justice

*\*Not a MHLG member*