The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

February 7, 2007

The Honorable Pete Domenici
United States Senate
328 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Domenici:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing to offer strong support for the Paul Wellstone Mental Health Parity Act of 2007. As the nation's largest organization representing people with severe mental illness and their families, NAMI is proud to offer our strong support for this important legislation.

NAMI is pleased to be associated with this effort to ensure employers and health plans offer equitable coverage of treatment for mental illness. NAMI has long shared your view that mental illnesses are real, that treatment works and that there is no justification for an employer or health plan to impose limitations or conditions on mental illness coverage that do not apply to all other diseases and health conditions. In 1996, you were able to bar discrimination with respect to annual and lifetime dollar limits. With this legislation, you and your Senate colleagues will take a monumental step forward by achieving parity for durational treatment limits (caps on inpatient days and outpatient visits that apply only to mental illness) and financial limitations (higher cost sharing, higher deductibles, etc.).

This legislation will help millions of American families' realize meaningful health insurance coverage in order to better access treatment for mental illness. By ending arbitrary and discriminatory limits on coverage, you will be ensuring that families do not exhaust their insurance coverage with a single hospitalization. Equitable coverage for treatment of mental illness is long overdue. NAMI is proud to join you with enthusiastic support for this important bill. We look forward to working with you to get this legislation through the Senate, the House and onto the White House.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of people living with mental illness and their families.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, M.S.W.
Executive Director

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