



May 27, 2009

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
U.S. House of Representatives
1419 Longworth Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schrader:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and our more than 1,100 affiliates, I am writing to offer our strong support for the Comparative Effectiveness Research Act of 2009 (HR 2502). As the nation's largest organization representing people living with serious mental illness and their families, we are pleased to support this important effort to further medical research and clinical practice.

NAMI has a long record of support for increased investment in research and treatment for illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and severe anxiety disorders. Comparative effectiveness research (CER) offers tremendous promise toward helping us understand which available treatments work best for particular patients. As increased investment is made in CER, it is critical that standards be developed to ensure that research is high quality and takes into account the wide diversity of needs of patients based on race, ethnicity, age, sex and prevalence of medical co-morbidities. In addition, CER must be subject to meaningful independent oversight that integrates the voice of patients and their families as stakeholders.

HR 2502 will help ensure that current and future investments in CER meet these critical goals. It establishes a strong oversight process and institutes critical patient protections that ensure autonomy for physicians to work with their patients to ensure they are able access the most appropriate treatment options.

Thank you for your leadership in bringing this legislation forward. NAMI looks forward to working with you to ensure that it is included in major health reform legislation that Congress will be moving on later this year.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Fitzpatrick, MSW
Executive Director

cc: Carla Perkins, NAMI Marion-Polk Counties
Chris Bouneff, President, NAMI Oregon