The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

July 19, 2005

The Honorable Rush Holt
U.S. House of Representatives
1019 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Holt:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) I am writing to express our strong support for your amendment to HR 525, the Small Business Health Fairness Act of 2005. As the nation's largest organization representing people with severe mental illnesses and their families, NAMI is pleased to support your effort to ensure that Association Health Plans (AHPs) comply with state laws requiring non-discriminatory coverage of treatment for mental illness.

As you know, 34 states have enacted laws requiring health plans to cover treatment for mental illness on the same terms and conditions as any other disease. These insurance parity laws are designed to protect children and adults living with mental illness -- and their families -- from the imposition of unfair and arbitrary limits on coverage. Numerous studies have demonstrated that these parity laws have little, if any, impact on escalating health insurance premiums. Moreover, they have been proven effective in helping increase worker productivity. In NAMI's view it is critically important that any effort to expand use of AHPs include a basic requirement for compliance with these important anti-discrimination laws that have been enacted by states.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. NAMI looks forward to working with you to protect access to adequate health insurance coverage for people with mental illness and their families.

Sincerely,

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

cc: Jerry Lindauer, NAMI Mercer County
Dorothy Goldstein & Doris Van Sise, NAMI Middlesex County

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