



July 17, 2007

The Honorable Max Baucus
The Honorable Charles Grassley
Committee on Finance
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Baucus and Senator Grassley:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing to offer support for the Finance Committee's draft legislation to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). As the nation's largest organization representing children and adults with mental illness and their families, NAMI is pleased to support the critically needed resources in this legislation to help states reach as many eligible uninsured children as possible.

NAMI is especially grateful for provisions in your legislation that will add as much as \$35 billion in new funding above the current \$25 billion base over the next five years in order to preserve coverage for as many as 6.6 million children (including those who would have lost coverage without this new investment). These new resources will also help states reach an estimated 3.3 million additional uninsured low-income children. Your legislation also makes important investments for outreach and enrollment to help states reach eligible children and streamline eligibility for Medicaid enrollment. Finally, NAMI also strongly support new options for states to document citizenship for Medicaid eligibility. This is a huge step forward for our nation.

As the Finance Committee moves forward on this important SCHIP reauthorization, NAMI would urge you and your colleagues to ensure that in states that use a private group health plan option for SCHIP, coverage for mental illness if offered on an equitable non-discriminatory basis. NAMI urges you and your colleagues to support inclusion of the Kerry-Smith Amendment to both eliminate the current 75% actuarial equivalence standard for mental illness coverage and put in place a standard that bars discriminatory limits on inpatient days, outpatient visits and cost sharing for mental health benefits. NAMI strongly supports the Kerry-Smith Amendment.

Finally, NAMI would like to express our strong support for proposals being offered by your colleague Senator Salazar to hold CMS and the Administration accountable for changes being contemplated to the Medicaid Rehabilitation Option. It is critically

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important that CMS not be allowed to go beyond the intent of Congress in limiting the ability of states to finance important community-based services for children and adults with serious mental illness.

NAMI looks forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure the strongest SCHIP reauthorization legislation possible. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue for uninsured children all across our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and "F".

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