The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

June 24, 2008

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

Dear Senator Reid:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I writing to offer our enthusiastic support for Senate passage of the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (HR 6331). As the nation's largest organization representing people with serious mental illness and their families, NAMI is pleased to support this important legislation to improve Medicare.

NAMI is especially grateful for the critical beneficiary protections and improvements included in HR 6331. Among these are:

- Addressing the discriminatory 50% cost sharing requirement for outpatient mental illness treatment, gradually lowering it to 20% as required for all other medical treatment,
- Reforming the Medicare Part D benefit to ensure that prescription drug plan must maintain broad access on their formularies to medications to treat serious mental illness (including antipsychotics, antidepressants and anticonvulsants),
- Restoring coverage under Part D for benzodiazepines, and
- Enacting a series of reforms that would allow more low-income beneficiaries to qualify for the Part D Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) and thereby avoid the program's "doughnut hole" coverage gap.

Thank you for your leadership on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries living with mental illness and their families. NAMI looks forward to working with you to ensure passage of HR 6331 this year. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

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

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