

STATEMENT ON INTRODUCTION OF *THE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ACT OF 2007*

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As an association representing behavioral healthcare organizations, professionals, and employers, we applaud today's introduction of the *Mental Health Parity Act of 2007* by Sens. Pete V. Domenici (R-NM), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), and Michael B. Enzi (R-WY). We thank these leaders and the co-sponsors of the Senate bill for taking action that moves forward one of the most far-reaching and comprehensive efforts to provide fairness and equity in coverage for both mental and addictive disorders.

This is truly a bipartisan measure that has also garnered support from the business and insurance sectors. It is a fair, balanced bill that, if enacted, would be a historic accomplishment in breaking down the long-standing discrimination in health insurance coverage for persons with mental illnesses.

The time for passage of parity for mental illness coverage is now, and this legislation is a workable and affordable measure. It would extend parity to individuals in both state-regulated health plans and in self-insured plans (while exempting small businesses with fewer than 50 employees). The *Mental Health Parity Act of 2007* would remove arbitrary limits on mental health benefits that are not required for physical and surgical services. The bill would apply its requirements on treatment limitations (e.g., visit and day limits) and financial requirements (e.g., deductibles, copays, and coinsurance) to all 50 states. At the same time, state laws that mandate that health plans provide mental health coverage (or coverage for specific disorders) will be preserved.

There has been tremendous bipartisan support for assuring all Americans fair and equitable healthcare coverage – for both mind and body. Research and experience show that parity coverage increases productivity and economic well-being for individuals, families, and communities.

We support this legislation, and we urge the Senate to pass the *Mental Health Parity Act of 2007*.

With clear support from the White House, Congress, and business leaders who have experienced first-hand the benefits of parity coverage, there is real momentum to end discrimination. The National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS) hopes that the positive energy generated by the Senate's action today will result in passage of comprehensive mental health parity legislation this year.

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