

## STATEMENT ON SENATE PASSAGE OF *THE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ACT OF 2007*

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As an association representing behavioral healthcare organizations, professionals, and employers, we applaud the United States Senate for passing – by unanimous consent – the *Mental Health Parity Act of 2007* (S.558) introduced by Sens. Pete V. Domenici (R-NM), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), and Michael B. Enzi (R-WY). We thank the co-sponsors of the Senate bill for taking leadership and the full Senate for taking action to move 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 a true bipartisan measure that has garnered strong and unprecedented support from consumers, providers, hospitals, employers, and health insurers. It is a fair, balanced bill that would break down the long-standing discrimination in health insurance coverage for persons with mental illnesses and substance use disorders.

The time for passage of parity 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 and substance use 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 or substance use coverage (or coverage for specific disorders) will be preserved.

Research and experience show that parity coverage increases productivity and economic well-being for individuals, families, and communities.

The National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS) will continue to work with the House to ensure that this important legislation makes it to the President's desk this year.

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