



September 25, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing to express strong support for immediate House passage of HR 976, the House-Senate agreement to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). As the nation's largest organization representing children and adolescents living with serious mental illness, NAMI urges all members to support passage of this important legislation.

NAMI is pleased that the House-Senate agreement adds important new resources to the SCHIP program to reach as many as 4 million uninsured children in moderate and low-income families. NAMI is especially supportive of funding in this legislation that will improve outreach and enrollment for uninsured children and adolescents that are currently eligible, but not yet enrolled in, Medicaid. NAMI is especially pleased that the agreement includes language that will hold private sector SCHIP plans accountable for ensuring that treatment for mental illness is covered on the same terms and conditions as all other medical disorders. This parity standard will help ensure that children and adolescents enrolled in SCHIP private sector plans will be able to better access mental illness treatment.

Finally, NAMI would like to express strong support for inclusion of language placing a moratorium, through May 24, 2008, on new regulations developed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that would place new restrictions on rehabilitative services funded under Medicaid. NAMI has important concerns with these draft regulations and believes that a delay in their implementation will provide the time needed to carefully assess their impact and make the changes that avoid disrupting critically important community-based services for the most vulnerable Medicaid beneficiaries.

Thank you for bringing this important legislation forward. It is critical that Congress pass this measure quickly, with strong bipartisan support, and avoid any disruption in the SCHIP program.

Sincerely,

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

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