

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 2, 2013

The Honorable Hilda Solis
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20210

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Timothy Geithner
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretaries Solis, Sebelius, and Geithner:

The horrific massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut has turned the attention of Americans nationwide to the inadequacies of mental health care in the United States. On October 18, 2012, several members of Congress wrote to you to inquire on the status of implementation and enforcement of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA). In the wake of the heinous mass shooting in Newtown, the undersigned now respectfully urge swift action to promulgate a final rule.

Earlier this year, thanks to a report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, we learned that only about 40 percent of the over 45 million American adults dealing with mental health related issues in 2010 actually received care. Despite the Interim Final Rule released in February 2010, we know that mental health patients in states across the country are still having trouble gaining access to basic services and desperately needed emergency care.

Insurance companies are finding new and creative ways to avoid the spirit of the landmark reforms signed into law through MHPAEA, and patients and their advocates continue to plea for real enforcement. Providers and patients have reported consistent exclusion of non-emergency mental health and addiction coverage and reduction in mental health and addiction benefits without requisite reduction in medical benefits. Further, some insurance plans are managing mental health and addiction benefits more strictly than medical benefits covered by the same plan. A recent GAO report found that insurance plans have actually increased the number of exclusions for mental health and addiction treatment since passage of MHPAEA.

We thank the Departments for efforts to date enforcing this law, but the issue of access to mental health care in America must be treated with newfound urgency. We already know the costs of untreated mental illness, from unnecessary disability and unemployment to incarceration and suicide, are economically staggering. Yet there is no way to quantify the unimaginable losses suffered by communities like Newtown. If there is even a chance that improved access to mental health services could avert tragedies like this most recent one or help families struggling with untreated mental illness of a loved one, then we must act swiftly and without further needless delay.

While we know that the overwhelming majority of Americans with psychiatric disorders are no more violent than those without, there is no question that all of our communities will benefit from greater access to mental health care. We once again urge the Departments to move forward with a final rule that finally gives Americans long overdue access to mental health parity under the law.

Sincerely,



Theodore E. Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Tim Ryan
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



John D. Dingell
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



George Miller
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



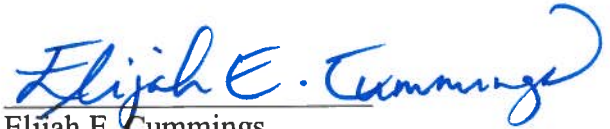
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James P. Moran
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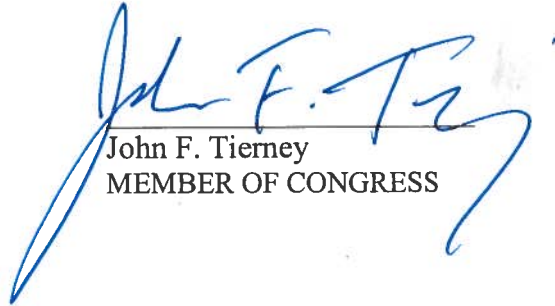
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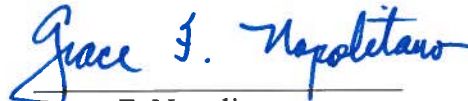
James P. McGovern
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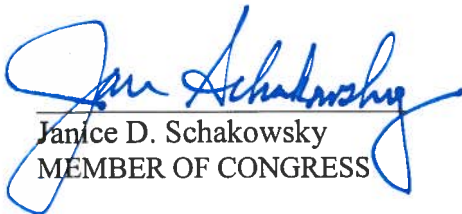
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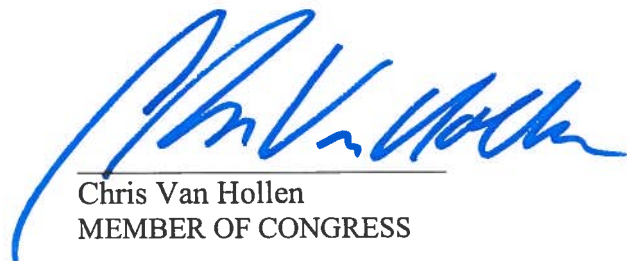
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