

NEWS RELEASE

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION

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APA Applauds Passage of Bill on Equal Mental Health Coverage

“Senate Moves to End Years of Discriminatory Coverage Practices”

Arlington, Va. – The American Psychiatric Association (APA) today applauds U.S. Senate passage of the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007, a bill that will end discriminatory insurance coverage of treatment for mental illnesses, providing them coverage equal to those of physical illnesses and injuries. The Senate’s action is the culmination of a decade of work by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), and the late Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.).

The Mental Health Parity Act of 2007, S. 558, will provide coverage to nearly 113 million people including the nearly 82 million people covered under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) who are unable to benefit from state parity laws. The bill provides strong federal protections for mental health including substance use disorder services – requiring that treatment limitations and cost-sharing requirements be equal to those that pertain to medical and surgical services. Day and visit maximums, copays, deductibles, and coinsurance all must be applied equally.

“The American Psychiatric Association applauds the Senators and all who provided leadership in ensuring passage of this vital legislation,” said Carolyn Robinowitz, M.D., APA president. “As physicians on the front line of treatment for Americans struggling with mental illness including substance use disorders, we know firsthand that treatment works. Non-discriminatory access to mental healthcare including substance use disorder treatments will make a real difference in the lives of millions of Americans.”

APA and the Coalition for Fairness in Mental Illness Coverage have pushed for and worked tirelessly with Senate sponsors over the past 10 years in gaining passage of federal parity legislation.

“S.558 represents landmark agreement between healthcare organizations, businesses and the insurance communities,” said Dr. Robinowitz. “Passage of this bill is a tremendous victory for the public, and the APA is proud to have been a part of this effort.”

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About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.