

National Call-in Day for Mental Health Parity Wednesday July 9th! Your help is urgently needed to help pass Mental Health Parity this session!

The US House of Representatives and the Senate negotiators have reached a final agreement on all the remaining mental health and addiction parity issues. However, approximately \$4 billion over 10 years in offsets is needed to pay for the bill and must be found before parity can be brought to the floor in both chambers for final passage. Once an offset has been found, there is commitment from leadership in the House and the Senate to bring the bill up for a vote as quickly as possible.

Although House and Senate leaders have not decided yet where they will find almost \$4 billion over 10 years to pay for the cost offsets required by Congressional rules, negotiations have successfully concluded on the key policy provisions. This compromise is the result of long negotiations and advocacy of organizations all across the country. The compromise includes many key provisions that were included in the House-passed bill, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act and would be an important step in ending insurance discrimination facing people with addiction and mental illness. Here are some key points in the compromise:

- The compromise requires parity in insurance coverage for addiction and mental health treatment for both in-network and out-of-network coverage. This does not mean that the bill requires that insurers cover addiction and mental services, only that if they do cover these services, there must be parity with medical/surgical benefits. This of course would be a very positive development both in requiring fairness in insurance coverage and taking a strong stand against discrimination toward people in recovery or still suffering from addiction and mental illness.
- The compromise requires plans to disclose their medical necessity criteria and reasons for any denials of coverage. This would be a major breakthrough, as many plans refuse to disclose medical necessity criteria or reasons for denial, especially when addiction treatment is sought.
- On the issue of protection of state laws, the compromise bill language is silent. The House bill explicitly protected state laws, and in earlier versions the Senate bill explicitly preempted state laws. Silence is a victory for those of us who agree with the House approach that state laws should be protected, since in most situations Congress must take explicit action to overrule a state law in order for state laws to be preempted. However, to make protection of state laws even more ironclad, we will be working to ensure that the legislative history of the bill makes clear that the sponsors' intention is to protect all state laws. That way, as important as the passage of a federal parity law would be, stronger state laws would remain in effect and states would be free to enact additional stronger protections in the years to come.

Wednesday July 9th is National Call-in Day so please call your Member of Congress and Senators on July 9th and tell them that now that an agreement has been reached between the House and the Senate, Congress must find the money to fund this historic mental health and addiction parity legislation and pass parity now. Here is a link to our National Call-in Day Online Advocacy Action Center;

<http://capwiz.com/facesandvoicesofrecovery/callalert/index.tt?alertid=11569321&type=CO>.

On the website you will see background information, a script for the call and a tool you can use to punch in your zip code and get your Member of Congress and Senator' names and phone numbers.

Thank you for supporting Mental Health Parity and for taking a few minutes to make these important calls. With your help we can get this done!

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