

Medicare Mental Health Equity Coalition

May 4, 2007

The Honorable Fortney H. (Pete) Stark
Chairman, Health Subcommittee
Committee on Ways and Means
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Stark:

The undersigned organizations in the Medicare Mental Health Equity Coalition, representing patients, health professionals, health care systems and family members, greatly appreciate your longstanding commitment to advancing the cause of mental health equity, particularly in the Medicare program.

The goal of the Medicare Mental Health Equity Coalition is to eliminate the additional coinsurance that is required of all Medicare beneficiaries who seek outpatient mental health care. As you know, Medicare imposes a 50 percent coinsurance rate for outpatient mental health services instead of the customary 20 percent coinsurance that applies to all other outpatient services. There is no reason for maintaining a discriminatory barrier to mental health care for America's seniors and individuals with disabilities, particularly since these populations present a high incidence of mental health concerns.

We applaud your introduction of the "Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act of 2007" (H.R. 1663) and strongly support your efforts in the Health Subcommittee to eliminate Medicare's blatantly discriminatory coinsurance requirement for outpatient mental health care. By removing this unfair coinsurance requirement, your legislation would bring payments for mental health care in line with those required for all other Medicare Part B services.

The Coalition appreciates your valuable work toward eliminating this inequity within the Medicare program, and we thank you for your leadership in securing mental health fairness for the nation's 44 million Medicare beneficiaries.

Sincerely,
Medicare Mental Health Equity Coalition

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry • American College of Physicians • American Psychiatric Association • American Psychological Association • Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness • Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc • Medicare Rights Center • Mental Health America • National Alliance on Mental Illness • National Association of Social Workers • National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare • Psychologists in Long Term Care, Inc • Suicide Prevention Action Network USA

CC: The Honorable Charles B. Rangel, Chairman, Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Jim McCrery, Ranking Member, Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Dave Camp, Ranking Member, Health Subcommittee