



Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

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Rep. Shuler Votes for Expanded Access to Mental Health Care *Bill will Help End Discrimination Against Patients with Mental Illnesses*

Washington, D.C. – Western North Carolinians with mental health care needs will have better access to care thanks to legislation passed by the House of Representatives and supported by Representative Heath Shuler. The bipartisan Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Act, H.R. 1424, will require parity for mental health care treatments.

The bill does not mandate group health plans provide any mental health coverage. However, if a plan does offer mental health coverage, then the coverage must be equal to medical and surgical services.

“Thousands of Americans suffer from mental illness. These illnesses are just as serious as any other disease, and deserve equal treatment,” Rep. Shuler said. “Unfortunately, many health plans do not provide the same coverage for mental illnesses as they do for physical ailments, and that is wrong. I am proud that we have taken an important step toward ensuring every American has the care they need and deserve.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that this legislation will have a miniscule impact on health insurance premiums.

Over the last eight years, the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) has had mental health “parity” coverage for 8.5 million federal employees for eight years, and research has shown that there has been no significant cost increase attributable to this new coverage.

The bill is supported by a diverse group of organizations including the American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Counseling Association, Families USA, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, National Mental Health Awareness Campaign, and Mental Health America.

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