

July 7, 2008

The Honorable Richard Durbin
U.S. Senate
309 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare – an organization representing 1,400 Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) and other community mental health and substance abuse agencies serving over 6 million low-income children and adults with mental illnesses – I am writing to express our strongest possible support for the “Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act.”

As last year’s tragedy at Virginia Tech illustrated, our nation’s colleges and universities need additional resources to strengthen their mental and behavioral health services in order to make our campuses and communities safer and stronger. The grants that would be authorized by the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act represent an important step towards that goal. In particular, the National Council applauds the inclusion of the requirement that grant applicants seek input from community mental health providers and other applicable community groups in the grant applications and, where possible, to demonstrate a relationship with a community mental health center to support screening and referral of students requiring intensive services.

In addition, the National Council supports the national public education campaign that the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act would create. In addition to educating students, their families, and members of the community, the campaign would also make important strides in reducing the stigma of mental illness.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you and your staff as you work to advance this legislation in the 110th Congress.

Sincerely,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW, CSW
President and CEO