

October 23, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
361-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Speaker
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Office of the House Republican Leader
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Reid, Senator McConnell, Madam Speaker Pelosi and Representative Boehner:

The National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (National Council) **urges you to pass a second stimulus measure that includes a temporary increase in the federal Medicaid match.** Timely action now will protect the health care of millions of vulnerable Americans and would be a prudent and responsive way to stimulate the economy.

The fiscal crisis confronting states poses an increasing risk to the health care services upon which tens of millions of American's children, seniors, people with disabilities and families depend. As of early August 2008, there are 13 states implementing or considering cuts that will eliminate or reduce health care services for low-income children and their families. While states attempt to balance their budgets in a fragile economy, the already tattered mental health and addictions safety net is in grave danger of collapsing as unemployment rates soar, anxiety over the future grows, and demand for services is at an all time high while we face cuts to publicly funded services and diminishing philanthropic giving.

An increase in federal support for rising state Medicaid costs, a provision based on the successful 2003 bi-partisan legislation, is a proven and effective way to help protect the health care of millions of Americans. According to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, the 2003 Jobs and Growth Tax Relief, which included \$10 billion going directly to help state Medicaid programs, helped avert cuts and preserve Medicaid coverage for millions of vulnerable Americans and, in some cases, allowed cuts to be reversed.

Congress should act before adjournment to protect and stimulate state economies, stabilize state budgets and help avert health care cuts. As in 2003, a short-term increase in federal support for state Medicaid programs could preserve coverage for millions of Americans who rely on Medicaid. I urge you in the strongest terms possible to act quickly with a second stimulus that provides states with increased federal support for Medicaid and additional state aid.

Respectfully yours,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW
President and CEO