

November \_\_, 2010

Gene L. Dodaro  
Acting Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The undersigned national organizations commend you on the selection of a talented and accomplished array of individuals to serve on the new National Health Care Workforce Commission, which was created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. However, we are concerned about the lack of representation for mental health, addiction and behavioral health given the Commission's critical role in influencing national policy regarding the nation's health care workforce. Accordingly, we respectfully request that at least one mental health, addiction and behavioral health professional be added to the Commission next year when nominees for positions are once again sought and that such representation continue into the future.

Mental health, addiction and behavioral health professionals provide vital services to address mental disorders and the behavioral aspects of chronic illnesses, including prevention, assessment, early intervention, and treatment. In fact, modifiable behavioral factors (e.g., smoking, improper diet, and inadequate physical activity) significantly contribute to the leading causes of chronic health conditions and mortality in the United States. These behavior-linked health conditions, including heart disease and diabetes, account for nearly 75% of our nation's health care spending. In addition, mental disorders, particularly depression, are one of the primary causes of disease burden world-wide. As a result, new and successful models of health care practice include the integration of mental health, addiction and behavioral health assessments and interventions with physical health treatments. Mental health, addiction and behavioral health professionals are especially effective in working with other health professionals as part of interdisciplinary health care teams in a variety of health care settings to provide seamless, cost-effective, and quality health care.

It is critical for policymakers to determine whether the demand for mental health, addiction and behavioral health professionals is currently being met and is projected to be met in the future. It is also important to identify and address any barriers so as to enhance the core participation of these professionals in our nation's reformed health care system.

Thank you in advance for your attention to our request to ensure the future inclusion of mental health, addiction and behavioral health professionals among the members of the National Health Care Workforce Commission.

Sincerely,

[*Cosigners as of Nov. 19: 17 + 3* ]

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Psychological Association  
American Art Therapy Association  
American Counseling Association  
American Nurses Association  
American Psychotherapy Association  
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
Association for the Advancement of Psychology  
Center for Integrated Behavioral Health Policy \*  
Clinical Social Work Guild 49, OPEIU  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association for Rural Mental Health  
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Alcohol & Drug Abuse Directors  
National Foundation for Mental Health \*  
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America \*  
U.S. Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

*\*nonmember*