

February 27, 2008

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

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Boehner:

On behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare I am writing to reiterate our strong support for HR 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007. Equalizing coverage for mental and substance use disorder treatment is one of the highest goals of our organization and its members.

The National Council is an association of almost 1,400 community-based mental health and addiction treatment organizations from around the country. Our members serve as the public sector safety net for almost six million children and adults living with mental illness and addiction. Our members provide a wide variety of clinical, rehabilitative and support services that facilitate community integration and recovery.

Our members work within a healthcare system that remains under-funded and fragmented and it is because of this reality that I must voice concerns over the method that I understand Congress is using to "pay-for" the laudable provisions within HR 1424; increasing the Medicaid pharmaceutical rebate.

Anywhere from 10 to 20 percent of the people seen by our members are indigent and have no insurance coverage, or move in and out of coverage during the course of the year. Typically, the only resources available to provide treatment to these individuals are an ever-decreasing amount of state general revenue monies.

In the face of this lack of coverage, our members rely on millions of dollars worth of free drug samples as well as medications provided through company sponsored Patient Assistance Programs to bridge this gap.

Without these programs, our members would not be able to provide needed psychotropic medications to thousands of individuals, with dire consequences for the individuals, families and communities involved.

I fear that increasing the pharmaceutical rebate in Medicaid could have the unintended consequence of reducing access to necessary medications for thousands of Americans. I urge you to find another way to pay for the provisions of HR 1424.

Sincerely,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW
President and CEO