

July 14, 2008

The Honorable Barney Frank
Chair, House Financial Services Committee
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Spencer Bachus
Ranking Member, House Financial Services Committee
2246 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Frank and Bachus:

On behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare I am writing to express our strong support for HR 5772, the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2008. This legislation will make significant changes and improvements to the Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program.

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.

Section 811 is a critical federal program that assists the lowest income people with serious and long-term disabilities, including those with mental illnesses and addictions, to live independently in the community by providing integrated affordable rental housing linked with voluntary services and supports.

This landmark and essential legislation will help address the enormous and unrelenting housing crisis faced by millions of extremely low income people with disabilities and will spur the creation of thousands of new 811 units every year by: 1) Authorizing a new Section 811 Demonstration Program that fulfills the promise of true community integration as envisioned in the Americans with Disabilities Act, and 2) Enacting long over-due reforms and improvements to the existing Section 811 production program essential for the program's long-term viability.

People with serious and long term disabilities, including those with mental illnesses and addictions, have the greatest unmet need for housing assistance of any group in the United States. The sole purpose of the Section 811 program is to create deeply affordable permanent rental housing linked with community-based services that people with disabilities want and need. In fact, it is the only federal program authorized to achieve this critically important federal housing policy objective.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW
President and CEO