

February 14, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare (National Council) and its member organizations – 1,800 Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs) and other community-based mental health and addiction providers serving over 6 million low income children and adults with mental health and substance use disorders – I am writing to extend our gratitude to you for your leadership in spearheading the passage of national healthcare reform.

The Affordable Care Act contains many provisions which will directly benefit individuals with mental illness and substance use disorders. Persons with mental illness are 2-3 times more likely than other Americans to be uninsured – thus, the day-to-day realities for the Americans we serve continue to be filled with health challenges and financial uncertainty as they struggle to find adequate care and support in their communities. Under health reform, insurance coverage will be expanded to cover millions of these individuals – and, for the first time, nearly all health insurance plans will be required to cover mental health and addictions treatment benefits at parity with medical/surgical benefits.

We truly recognize the value of comprehensive healthcare reform and the opportunity it brings to improve the lives of the individuals we serve. In fact, health reform has already begun to prove its worth by supporting, through the Prevention and Public Health fund, grants for the integration of primary and behavioral healthcare. These benefits to our community will only continue with the rollout of the Medicaid Health Homes State Option, the Medicaid expansion, and more.

We urge you to continue your efforts to push for a meaningful implementation process, so as to better ensure access to high-quality, cost-effective care for all Americans. We are extremely appreciative of the months of hard work that your Administration and the Congress have spent on healthcare reform. We urge you to continue working to accomplish the long-sought goal of healthcare reform to help those most in need of a better functioning health care system.

We look forward to continuing to serve as a partner and resource in this effort to pass a comprehensive healthcare reform bill out of the Congress.

Sincerely,



Linda Rosenberg, MSW, President and CEO
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare