

February X, 2010

Dear President Obama:

Community mental health and addiction provider agencies across the country would like to extend our gratitude to you for the leadership you have shown on healthcare reform. We urge you to continue your efforts to push for a meaningful healthcare reform bill that makes much-needed reforms to better ensure access to high-quality, cost-effective care for all Americans.

As members of the **National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare**, which represents over 1,700 Community Mental Health Centers and other community-based mental health and addiction agencies serving over 6 million low-income persons with mental health and addiction disorders, we truly recognize the value of comprehensive healthcare reform and the opportunity it brings to improve the lives of the individuals we serve.

We stand united in support of legislation that incorporates mental health and addiction treatments, supports, and providers in all aspects of healthcare delivery and organization. These principles include providing meaning coverage to all Americans that includes parity for mental health and substance use conditions, curbing costs responsibly rather than simply shifting costs to clients, guaranteeing coverage regardless of pre-existing conditions, eliminating lifetime and annual caps on health insurance, and ensuring access to long-term care and supports. In addition, the authorization of Federally-Qualified Behavioral Health Centers (FQBHCs) and the inclusion of individuals with chronic conditions, including those with mental illness and substance use disorders, in a Medicaid State Plan Option to Promote Health Care Homes will provide vital assistance to safety net providers.

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 represent continue to be filled with health challenges and financial uncertainty as they struggle to find adequate care and support in their communities.

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,