

# Mental Health Liaison Group

February 19, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20501

Vice President Joe Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. President and Vice President:

On behalf of the millions of Americans living with mental and substance use disorders, their families and communities, the undersigned mental health organizations want to thank you, Vice President Biden and your Administration for including in your FY2016 Budget the elimination of the Medicare 190-day lifetime limit, which limits Medicare beneficiaries to just 190 days of inpatient psychiatric hospital care during their lifetime.

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, parents and family members, advocates, providers, and mental health experts, is dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

In the FY2016 Budget you propose to eliminate the discrimination against mental illnesses that continues to exist in the Medicare program as Medicare beneficiaries are still limited to 190-days of inpatient psychiatric care during their lifetime. There is no such lifetime limit for any other Medicare specialty inpatient hospital service.

Through passage of *Affordable Care Act of 2010* and the *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008*, coverage for mental health and addictive disorders is now required to be on par with other medical disorders. We must now finally give Medicare beneficiaries the full parity that other individuals now have under the law.

The elimination of the 190-day limit will equalize Medicare mental health coverage with private health insurance coverage, offer beneficiaries the choice of inpatient psychiatric care providers, increase access for the most seriously ill, improve continuity of care and create a more cost-effective Medicare program.

Mr. President, MHLG thanks you for your leadership and stands ready to work with you and the Administration to eliminate this discrimination against Medicare beneficiaries with mental health and substance use disorders. We invite you to contact our MHLG Steering Committee member, Nancy Trenti at 202/393-6700 with comments or with questions.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities  
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy  
American Association on Health and Disability\*

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
c/o Chuck Ingoglia, National Council for Behavioral Health at [chucki@thenationalcouncil.org](mailto:chucki@thenationalcouncil.org),  
Laurel Stine, American Psychological Association at [lstine@apa.org](mailto:lstine@apa.org)  
and Debbie Plotnick, Mental Health America at [dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.org](mailto:dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.org)

American Dance Therapy Association  
 American Foundation for Suicide Prevention  
 American Group Psychotherapy Association  
 American Mental Health Counselors Association  
 American Nurses Association  
 American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
 American Group Psychotherapy Association  
 American Psychiatric Association  
 American Psychiatric Nurses Association  
 American Psychoanalytic Association  
 American Psychological Association  
 American Orthopsychiatric Association  
 Anxiety and Depression Association of America  
 Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
 Clinical Social Work Association  
 Clinical Social Work Guild  
 Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies  
 Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance  
 Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action  
 Families USA  
 Mental Health America  
 National Alliance on Mental Illness  
 National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
 National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors  
 National Association of Anorexia and Associated Disorders, ANAD  
 National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems  
 National Association of Social Workers  
 National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, (NASMHPD)  
 National Council for Behavioral Health  
 National Disability Rights Network  
 National League for Nursing  
 National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
 No Health without Mental Health  
 Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America  
 NJ Society for Clinical Social Work, CSW Guild 49 OPEIU-AFL-CIO\*\*  
 The Jewish Federations of North America  
 The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

cc: Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

*\* MHLG Observer*

*\*\* not a MHLG member*

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
 c/o Chuck Ingoglia, National Council for Behavioral Health at [chucki@thenationalcouncil.org](mailto:chucki@thenationalcouncil.org),  
 Laurel Stine, American Psychological Association at [lstine@apa.org](mailto:lstine@apa.org)  
 and Debbie Plotnick, Mental Health America at [dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.org](mailto:dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.org)