



Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance

January 19, 2016

The Honorable Joe Kennedy III  
U.S. House of Representatives  
306 Cannon House Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Kennedy:

On behalf of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), it is with great pleasure that I endorse H.R. 4276, the Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act. This bill would put in place a meaningful system to ensure individuals with mental health conditions have access to the care they are entitled to receive under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), (Public Law 110-460). I look forward to working with you to see H.R. 4276 become law.

As the leading peer-led organization supporting individuals with mood disorders and their families, DBSA understands the importance of access to care. For too many years, stigma has kept people in need of treatment from seeking help. Yet it is only through access to care that is balanced, person-centered, and wellness-oriented that people will be inspired to persevere and transform from surviving to thriving, from illness to wellness. With enactment of MHPAEA, and later the Affordable Care Act, individuals with private insurance were intended to receive access to such inspiring, transformative care. However, far too many barriers to care remain, and most individuals with mental health conditions like depression and bipolar disorder are still unable to access protocols that treat all the way to wellness.

The Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act would require insurance issuers to disclose annually to federal regulators the analyses they perform in making parity determinations, along with the rates and reasons for mental health claims denials versus medical/surgical denials. It also would require the Department of Health & Human Services, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Treasury to undertake a minimum of 12 random audits of health plans per year to discourage noncompliance with existing parity laws. Finally, it would establish a Patient Parity Portal, allowing consumers to easily access all publicly available parity information and submit complaints in a central online clearinghouse. These steps are critically important to ensuring health plans provide persons with mood disorders coverage for the care they need in a timely manner.

We at DBSA look forward to working with you as you advance your legislation through Congress. As you may know, DBSA has a nationwide network of 300 chapters and reaches over three million people through peer support, educational materials and presentations, and health and wellness resources. We stand ready, three million strong, to offer our support in raising awareness about the importance of your bill for people living with mood disorders, and for all people in a healthy, vibrant nation.

Sincerely,

Allen Doederlein  
President  
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance