

access to treatment for addiction in health plans for all Americans.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL M. MILLER,
President and Board Chair.

SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION
NETWORK USA,
Washington, DC, March 3, 2008.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Minority Leader, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER AND LEADER BOEHNER: On behalf of the Suicide Prevention Action Network USA (SPAN USA), I am writing to express our support for HR 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act. This landmark legislation would prohibit insurance discrimination against 80 million Americans suffering from addiction and mental illness.

Our country cannot afford to wait to pass this legislation. The cost of doing nothing to help people with their mental health and addiction problems is staggering. Each year, more than 31,000 individuals die by suicide and 1.3 billion work days are lost due to mental health and substance abuse disorders, more than arthritis, stroke, heart attack and cancer combined. Moreover, workers with untreated depression cost their employers \$31 billion a year in lost productivity and workers with untreated alcoholism cost their employers \$135 billion in lost productivity each year.

The time for the passage of parity is now. Far too many individuals who complete suicide have never seen a mental health professional. Legislation to bring full equity to mental health coverage has been introduced in the House in every Congress since the 107th session but until this year, it never received consideration in committees or on the floor despite having over 218 bipartisan cosponsors. Now, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 1424), introduced by Representatives PATRICK KENNEDY (D-RI) and JIM RAMSTAD (R-MN), has the support of the majority of the House with 273 cosponsors. The bill has been favorably reported by all three committees of jurisdiction. Lastly, fourteen field hearings documenting the need for equity in health plans for the treatment of addiction and mental illness were held in 2007.

Because of the critical nature of this legislation, we support passage of H.R. 1424. SPAN USA stands ready to assist you toward the goal of achieving fairness in health plans for all Americans.

Sincerely,

JERRY REED, PH.D., M.S.W.,
Executive Director, Suicide Prevention
Action Network USA.

HONORING LORNA MULLINGS

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Mr. TOWNS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Lorna Mullings, a remarkable woman who after a 13-year career in banking, pursued her real passion of nursing. So in 1986, as a new immigrant, an active church worker, a wife and mother of two small children, Lorna Mullings decided to return to school and become a Registered Nurse.

In June of 1992, she graduated from St. Joseph College with a bachelors degree in nursing.

Amid the cheers of her now teenage children, she graduated Hunter College with a double masters in nursing and public health in 2002. However, midway through pursuing her masters degree which was focusing on HIV/AIDS, she was doing course work on health disparities among developed and developing countries when "something hit home." There was a definite connection with a previous paper in her undergraduate studies in which she documented her life's goal to work among the poor people of Somalia. This was also a time of defining professional and personal dreams and because her belief in God was so strong, she knew that becoming a missionary nurse was her special calling.

With her pastor's/husband's approval, blessing, and backing, she formed the Dorcas Medical Mission in 1999. In 2000, Lorna planned and implemented the mission's first outreach to Kingston, Jamaica. Since that time, she has led 15 medical missions to nine countries, bringing free dental, medical, surgical, food and clothing to thousands of needy families worldwide. In addition to these missions, she is currently in the process of opening an orphanage in Alexandria, South Africa for the caring of children left orphaned by parents who were victims of HIV/AIDS.

Lorna Mullings has worked as a nurse for over 15 years in the areas of medical, surgical, endoscopy, recovery, psychiatry, administration and community health. Today, she works as a nurse manager at the Interfaith Medical Center, managing the pediatric and medical surgical units.

Madam Speaker, Ms. Mullings is well deserving of our respect for her humanitarian works and charitable outreach—she went on to initiate the Rugby Feeding Program, which now feeds over 70 homeless people with hot meals 4 days a week and heads the Rugby Family Services. Her compassion for the less fortunate is indeed noteworthy, and I am proud to recognize her today.

KATHERINE HOFFMAN

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Katherine Hoffman of Trenton, Missouri. Katherine is a very special young woman who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Girl Scouts of America, and earning the most prestigious award of Girl Scout Gold Award.

Katherine has been very active with her troop, participating in many scout activities. In order to receive the prestigious Gold Award, Katherine has completed all seven requirements that promote community service, personal and spiritual growth, positive values and leadership skills.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Katherine Hoffman for her accomplishments with the Girl Scouts of America and for her efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Girl Scout Gold Award.

HONORING CORN BELT POWER COOPERATIVE

HON. TOM LATHAM

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Mr. LATHAM. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Corn Belt Power Cooperative of Humboldt, Iowa, on the occasion of their 60th anniversary.

Before 1947, electric cooperatives were unable to keep up with farmers' additional need of electricity to power their homes and farms, and power companies in the cities were wary of selling electricity to rural Iowa. As a result of the increased demand, two smaller power cooperatives merged to create a partnership that could build a larger coal-fired generation, thus forming Corn Belt Power.

In the early years, Corn Belt Power was a source for electric lights, storing and preparing food in rural homes, pumping water, and bringing ease to daily farm chores. Today Corn Belt Power is a source of power for sophisticated livestock systems and computers, heat pumps and efficient heating and cooling systems for homes. Corn Belt Power has withstood many ups and downs, including the energy crisis in the 1970s, the farm crisis of the 1980s, and our need for energy efficiency today.

Corn Belt Power Cooperative of Humboldt is dedicated to benefiting rural Iowa and the agricultural community, and for this I offer them my utmost congratulations and thanks. It is an honor to represent the employees of Corn Belt Power, the board of directors, and President Donald Feldman in the U.S. Congress, and I wish them continued success in serving the people of rural Iowa.

PAUL WELLSTONE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. DIANA DEGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the following letters of support for H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, submitted for the RECORD on the floor debate of this bill.

AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, February 29, 2008.

Hon. PATRICK J. KENNEDY,
Cannon HOB,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE KENNEDY: On behalf of the American Correctional Association and our 18,000 members I'd like to express our full support for your bill, H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007.

The health care system in our country has neglected the mentally ill long enough and it must change. We in criminal justice and more specifically the corrections profession know first-hand the effect inadequate mental health care has on our communities. Jails and prisons have become defacto mental health hospitals wherein a high prevalence of mental health problems and addiction among inmates is common and recidivism rates are high.

A report issued by the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics in September 2006 revealed that more than half of all prison and jail inmates had a mental health problem. BJS also reported that more than two-fifths of state inmates and more than half of jail inmates showed symptoms of mania, 23% of state prisoners and 30% of jail inmates suffer from depression and that 15% of state prisoners and 24% of jail inmates met the criteria for psychotic disorders. 24% of state prisoners and 19% of jail inmates suffered from substance dependence or abuse and an estimated 42% of inmates in state prisons and nearly half of those in local jails were found to have both a mental health problem and a substance dependence or abuse problem.

Without proper care and treatment in a mental hospital, these individuals will never recover or be healthy again nor will they ever be able to live a normal life. Most likely they will continue to recidivate, crowd our facilities, drive up costs throughout the entire criminal justice system and cause harm to others and unto themselves. Quite simply, correctional facilities are not equipped and corrections personnel are not trained to handle the mentally ill individuals.

We appreciate your leadership on this issue and offer you our full support for H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007.

Sincerely,

GARY D. MAYNARD,
President.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ANOREXIA
NERVOSA AND ASSOCIATED DIS-
ORDERS,

Highland Park, IL, March 3, 2008.

Re the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and
Addiction Equity Act of 2007.

Hon. PATRICK J. KENNEDY and Hon. JIM
RAMSTAD,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVES KENNEDY AND
RAMSTAD: I am writing on behalf of ANAD,
the National Association of Anorexia
Nervosa and Associated Disorders, to urge
House Members to vote YES on your bill
H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health
& Addiction Equity Act. ANAD is the nation's
oldest organization dedicated to alleviating
the problems of eating disorders, with an
active membership composed of professionals,
sufferers, and their families.

More than 8 million Americans suffering
from eating disorders who face overwhelming
obstacles to health insurance coverage for
mental health treatment fully embrace the
passage of this legislation. Eating disorders
kill. Anorexia nervosa has the highest
mortality rate of any mental illness. By
closing the loopholes in the 1996 federal
parity law and requiring equity in eating
disorders coverage, treatment, and financial
requirements, this legislation will greatly
assist Americans with these potentially
deadly illnesses without a costly burden to
employers.

ANAD hopes that passage of your strong
bipartisan bill will hasten the completion of
negotiations with the Senate on a bill that
will cover the full range of mental illnesses
and become law this year. Further delay is
unacceptable, especially for those whose
lives are in peril.

We thank you for your leadership on this
important issue.

Sincerely,

VIVIAN HANSON MEEHAN,
President.

EASTER SEALS,
Washington, DC, March 3, 2008.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: Easter Seals urges
you to vote to support the passage of H.R.

1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and
Addiction Equity Act of 2007. Access to men-
tal health services is essential for anyone to
live a healthy life.

Mental health disorders are the second
leading cause of disability and premature
death in the United States and are often ex-
perienced by people with disabilities. Many
health insurance plans set cost limits on
mental health treatment, but do not impose
similar cost limits on other medical and sur-
gical benefits. It is critical that access to
mental health services be on par with access
to services for other medical conditions.
Breaking down barriers to accessing mental
health services improves the lives of people
with disabilities, strengthens families and
saves lives.

We look forward to continuing to work
with you as the process moves forward.
Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

KATHERINE BEH NEAS,
Vice President, Government Relations.

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION,
Washington, DC, March 4, 2008.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: The Service Em-
ployees International Union (SEIU) urges
you to vote "yes" on H.R. 1424, the Paul
Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equ-
ity Act. Millions of American families are
touched by mental illness and substance
abuse disorders, and our workplaces are less
productive when mental illness is untreated
and stigmatized. H.R. 1424 would require that
group health plans cover mental illness on
the same terms that it provides for medical
and surgical coverage. There is a growing
body of evidence that supports the effective-
ness of various treatments for people suf-
fering from mental illness and substance
abuse disorders. High co-pays and
deductibles can discourage access to treat-
ment, and arbitrary limits can result in dis-
continued therapies that would otherwise be
effective. Better screening and early treat-
ment is often the most cost-effective treat-
ment. It is time to pass H.R. 1424 and give
new hope and treatment to millions of pa-
tients and families struggling with mental
illness.

Votes on this legislation will be added to
the SEW scorecard found at www.seiu.org. If
you have any questions, please contact Ann
Kempinski, Deputy Director of Legislation.

Sincerely,

ANNA BURGER,
International Secretary-Treasurer.

AUTISM SOCIETY OF AMERICA,
Bethesda, MD, March 2, 2008.

Hon. PATRICK KENNEDY,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: On behalf of
the Autism Society of America, we write in
strong support of the Paul Wellstone Mental
Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007.
This legislation will go a long way to end
discrimination by private health insurers by
mandating parity in the treatment of mental
health coverage.

Autism is a complex developmental dis-
ability that typically appears during the
first three years of life and affects a person's
ability to communicate and interact with
others. Autism is defined by a certain set of
behaviors and is a "spectrum disorder" that
affects individuals differently and to varying
degrees. There is no known single cause for
autism, nor is there a single treatment.

While there is no single treatment for au-
tism, intensive, sustained special education
programs and behavior therapy does improve
the function of children with autism, allow-
ing them to increase their communication

skills and learn. Individuals with autism
often benefit from mental health treatments
including the prescribing of medication and
counseling. Beyond these, there are new
treatments and interventions on the horizon,
and it is important that individuals with au-
tism can access breakthrough therapies.

Your legislation provides equal treatment
of mental health insurance benefits com-
pared to medical and surgical benefits spe-
cifically with respect to cost sharing re-
quirements, financial requirements, and
treatment limitations. Many individuals
with autism have co-morbid mental illnesses
and would greatly benefit from enactment of
this legislation.

ASA, the nation's leading grassroots au-
tism organization, exists to improve the
lives of all affected by autism. On behalf of
our 200,000 members and supporters across
the nation, we thank you for your leadership
on this issue, and strongly support you in
your efforts.

Sincerely,

LEE GROSSMAN,
President and CEO.

PAUL WELLSTONE MENTAL
HEALTH AND ADDICTION EQUITY
ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I would
like to have the following letters of support for
H.R. 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health
and Addiction Equity Act, submitted for the
record on the floor debate of this bill.

MARCH 4, 2008.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Capitol
Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Republican Leader, House, Capitol Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI AND LEADER
BOEHNER: Consumers Union, the nonprofit
publisher of Consumer Reports, urges you to
support HR 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental
Health and Addiction Equity Act, to prohibit
insurance discrimination against 80 million
Americans suffering from addiction and
mental illness.

Over 25 million people need mental health
and addiction treatment but are not getting
it. Each year, 1.3 billion work days are lost
due to mental disorders, more than arthritis,
stroke, heart attack and cancer combined.
Moreover, workers with untreated depression
cost their employers \$31 billion a year in lost
productivity and workers with untreated al-
coholism cost their employers \$135 billion in
lost productivity each year. The need for equ-
ity in health plans for the treatment of ad-
diction and mental illness is well docu-
mented—14 field hearings were held around
the country in 2007. The time to pass this
legislation is now.

H.R. 1424, introduced by Representatives
Patrick Kennedy and Jim Ramstad, has the
support of the majority of the House with 273
cosponsors. Because of the critical nature of
this legislation, we urge you to support HR
1424 and move it to the full floor for a vote
as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

GAIL SHEARER,
Director, Health Policy
Analysis, Consumers
Union Washington
Office.