



Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

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May 9, 2007

The Honorable Fortney "Pete" Stark
239 Cannon House Office Building
First Street and Independence Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stark:

On behalf of the more than 200 members of the Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH) and the individuals and families that our members serve, we want to thank you for your leadership in addressing the critical issues surrounding Medicare mental health and substance abuse parity. Every day millions of seniors and disabled are unable to access mental health care, as the current system of treatment delivery is grossly inadequate.

We appreciate your longtime efforts and direction in taking a stand on the issue of inadequate care by introducing the Medicare Mental Health Modernization Act, H.R. 1663. Passage of the bill would assure that the current Medicare law that imposes limits and regulations on access, levels, and intensity of care is changed.

AABH also supports the changes the bill makes by modernizing Medicare mental health benefits, as the legislation also changes the current Medicare law that requires a 50 percent coinsurance requirement on outpatient psychiatric services, while a coinsurance of 20 percent applies to other Part B services. Continuing the discriminatory barrier to mental health services for Medicare patients is unacceptable.

And thank you for all you have done in the past to improve the lives of millions of Americans with psychiatric disorders. We enthusiastically support the bill and look forward to continuing to work with you to get this legislation passed by Congress. If you have any questions, or if you need our support in any other way, please contact JoAnne Mandel, AABH chairperson - Public Policy Committee.

Sincerely,

Stephen Michael
President - AABH