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June 25, 2008

The Honorable Pete Stark
239 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Stark:


On behalf of the Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law—the leading national legal-advocacy organization representing children and adults with mental illnesses—I am writing to offer our strong support for the Healthy Transitions Act.

For young adults with serious mental illnesses, obtaining access to health care, employment, housing and other life services and supports is not without hurdles. This population often faces the barrier of “aging out” of the service system due to myriad differing rules on eligibility factors across a range of federal programs. In order to foster resiliency and promote recovery from serious mental illness, a successful transition to adulthood is essential. We therefore applaud your leadership in calling upon the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO) to explore the challenges that young adults with serious mental illnesses experience as they transition to adulthood. And we welcome your legislative response in the introduction of the Healthy Transitions Act.

Through planning and implementation grants, the Healthy Transitions Act will assist States in developing a coordinated service-delivery system to help young adults with a serious mental illness to obtain the resources, knowledge and skills necessary for adulthood. By facilitating access to services, such as independent life skills, through areas such as infrastructure development and technical assistance, States will afford to young adults greater continuity of critical services and help them avoid “falling through the cracks.” Additionally, this legislation recognizes the various federal entities that serve young adults with serious mental illnesses and brings these entities together in partnership to best coordinate services for this population.

Once again, we welcome the findings of the GAO report and look forward to working with you and your colleagues to enact the Healthy Transitions Act.

Sincerely,


Laurel Stine
Director, Federal Relations