Mental Health Liaison Group

April 10, 2015

The Honorable Rob Portman U.S Senate 448 Russell Office Building Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich U.S. Senate 702 Hart Office Building Washington DC 20510

Dear Senators Portman and Heinrich:

The undersigned national organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, providers and professionals are pleased to express support for the Medical Evaluation Parity for Service Members (MEPS) Act (S. 646). As organizations that advocate for improved access to mental health and addiction services, including screening, assessment, early intervention, treatment and rehabilitation services and supports for Americans, we applaud your leadership in introducing legislation that promotes the mental health of our nation's servicemembers.

The MEPS would require the Department of Defense to screen military recruits for mental health disorders, as it routinely does for physical health conditions, and to review its ability to issue electronic health records for use by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other healthcare entities when servicemembers depart active duty.

A recent US Army study found that about 20% of Army recruits have mental health disorders, and half of soldiers who have attempted suicide first did so before joining the Army. In addition, research has shown that repeated overseas deployments, such has occurred recently rather frequently, increase servicemembers' likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Your commitment to improving our Nation's military capability and the quality of life for our servicemembers, their families, and their fellow military members is commendable, and we thank you for undertaking such a goal. We believe the MEPS will aid substantially in early detection and treatment of mental health conditions in

servicemembers, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to help enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

American Association of Pastoral Counselors

American Counseling Association

American Dance Therapy Association

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Mental Health Counselors Association

American Nurses Association

American Orthopsychiatric Association

American Psychoanalytic Association

American Psychological Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Clinical Social Work Association

Clinical Social Work Guild

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)

National Association of Counties *

National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors

National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems

National Association of Social Workers

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

National Disability Rights Network

National League for Nursing

No Health without Mental Health

Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

The Trevor Project

Tourette Syndrome Association

Treatment Communities of America