

Mental Health Liaison Group

October 2, 2015

The Honorable Ted Deutch
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
2206 Rayburn House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Mental Health Liaison Group Support of Anna Westin Act of 2015 (HR 2515)

Dear Congressman Deutch and Ros-Lehtinen:

On behalf of the Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a national coalition of behavioral health advocacy organizations representing consumer, family members, advocates professionals and providers, we are writing to provide our support for the Anna Westin Act of 2015 (HR 2515).

Eating disorders affect at least 30 million Americans and have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses; at least 20% of people suffering will die, with suicide being a leading cause of death. Due to a lack of early identification and intervention, as well as a lack of access to treatment, only 1 in 10 people with eating disorders will receive treatment. Additionally, notwithstanding clear congressional intent to include eating disorder and residential treatment coverage for all mental health disorders within the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (“Mental Health Parity”), people with eating disorders are continually denied treatment due to perceived ambiguities in the law and a lack of enforcement.

This comprehensive legislation offers major advancements in our nation’s mental health system that will help individuals affected by eating disorders –from sufferers, to treatment providers, to family members. H.R. 2515 improves care for those experiencing eating disorders by clarifying treatment coverage for residential treatment services under Mental Health Parity for all mental health disorders. The measure also provides for training programs to educate health professionals, school personnel, and the public on early identification of disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder. In addition, the legislation incorporates the Truth in Advertising Act, requiring the FTC to study the extent to which digitally altered body and facial images of people in advertising may contribute to eating disorders in children and young adults.

More immediately, given the nature of the urgent crisis in the mental health system, the MHLG supports the Anna Westin Act of 2015.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers
c/o Chuck Ingoglia, National Council for Behavioral Health at chucki@thenationalcouncil.org,
Laurel Stine, American Psychological Association at lstine@apa.org
and Debbie Plotnick, Mental Health America at dplotnick@mentalhealthamerica.org

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American Association on Health and Disability*
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Center for Clinical Social Work
Clinical Social Work Association
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
Jewish Federations of North America
Mental Health America
National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Inc.
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Association of Social Workers
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery
National Council for Behavioral Health
National Disability Rights Network
No Health Without Mental Health
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
School Social Work Association of America
Tourette Association of America
The Trevor Project

**MHLG Observer*

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