COALITION FOR WHOLE HEALTH

September 9, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader Reid, Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader Boehner,

On behalf of the Coalition for Whole Health, the undersigned organizations express our strong support for passage of comprehensive healthcare reform legislation before the end of the year. Reform presents a unique opportunity to significantly expand health coverage, increase access to necessary care, improve public health and reduce costs. To accomplish these goals, it is imperative full and equitable addiction and mental illness prevention, treatment and recovery supports be part of any healthcare reform proposals that are developed and enacted by Congress.

Millions of Americans suffer from untreated mental illness and/or addiction to alcohol and other drugs. Medical experts agree that addiction and mental illnesses are chronic diseases that can be prevented and treated effectively. Unfortunately, less than half of the 15 million adults with serious mental illness received treatment or counseling for a mental health problem and only 18 percent of the 22.6 million people in need of help for an alcohol and/or drug use problem received any form of treatment in the past year.

We are very encouraged that the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the House Tri-Committee bills include addiction and mental health in the minimum benefits package and apply the Wellstone Domenici parity standard to all qualified health plans. We are also encouraged by provisions in some bills to expand prevention and treatment services and authorize workforce development grants for the mental health and substance use disorder systems. It is critical that all these provisions be included in healthcare reform to ensure that individuals and their families have better coverage and access to mental health and substance use disorder prevention and treatment services, improving the health and quality of life for millions of Americans.

Fully and equitably including mental health and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery support services and providers in national healthcare reform will significantly lower healthcare costs. For example:

- According to the Agency for Health Research Quality (AHRQ), 25 percent of the admissions to our nation’s hospitals are directly related to mental illness and/or substance use disorders.
Inpatient, emergency room, and total healthcare costs decline by 39 percent, 35 percent, and 26 percent respectively after patients who suffer from alcohol or drug addiction receive treatment. For these patients, integrating medical and substance use disorder treatment services results in decreases in hospitalization rates, fewer days of inpatient treatment, and fewer emergency room visits. As a result, total medical costs per patient per month are more than halved, from $431 to $200.

A Washington State study found that costs for disabled Medicaid beneficiaries receiving outpatient mental health treatment were lowered by about $105 per member per month in the first follow-up year and $126 per member per month in the second year, compared to clients with mental illness who did not receive mental health treatment. Medicaid beneficiaries who received substance use disorder treatment had medical costs that were $4,500 less over a five-year follow-up period than those of the average untreated client.

Untreated substance use disorders and mental illnesses can aggravate or mask symptoms of other medical conditions and complicate the effectiveness of treatment for co-occurring chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease.

The success of national healthcare reform will be judged on its ability to provide essential services to all Americans, improve overall health outcomes, and control costs. When substance use disorders and mental health issues are addressed and treated as the preventable, treatable chronic diseases they are, systems reap substantial cost savings while dramatically improving health. For these reasons, it is essential that the full continuum of mental health and addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery services are effectively incorporated into healthcare reform.

Thank you again for your leadership. The Coalition for Whole Health looks forward to working with you and your staff as healthcare reform moves forward. If we can serve as a resource, please do not hesitate to contact Gabrielle de la Gueronnier or Dan Belnap at 202-544-5478, Carol McDaid at 202-737-8168, or Holly Merbaum at 202-737-7393.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

AIDS Action Council
Alliance for Children and Families
American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP)
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP)
American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (AATOD)
American Association of Children’s Residential Centers
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Association of Suicidology
American Dance Therapy Association
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Jail Association
American Nurses Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Probation and Parole Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Anxiety Disorders Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Medical Education and Research in Substance Abuse (AMERSA)
Association for the Advancement of Psychology
Association of Recovery Schools
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Betty Ford Center
Betty Ford Institute
Black Psychiatrists of America, Inc
Bradford Health Services
Campaign for Mental Health Reform
Carnevale Foundation
Caron Treatment Centers
Carter Center Mental Health Program
Center for Integrated Behavioral Health Policy, Department of Health Policy, George Washington University Medical Center
Child Welfare League of America
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
Clinical Social Work Association
Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy and Action
Entertainment Industries Council
Ethan King Foundation
Faces and Voices of Recovery
Friends of SAMHSA
Hazelden Foundation
Hepatitis C Association
International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC)
International CURE
Justice Policy Institute
Legal Action Center
McShin Foundation
Mental Health America
NAACP
NAADAC-The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National African American Drug Policy Coalition, Inc
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for Children of Alcoholics
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers
National Association of Drug Court Professionals
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD)
National Association on Alcohol, Drugs and Disability
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc (NCADD)
National Council on Problem Gambling
National Family Partnership
National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
National Foundation for Mental Health
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Mental Health Awareness Campaign (NMHAC)
National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness
National Student Assistance Association
NIATx
North American Association of Masters in Psychology
Partnership for a Drug-Free America
Physicians and Lawyers for National Drug Policy (PLNDP)
State Associations of Addiction Services
Strategic Applications International, LLC
Suicide Awareness Voices of Education
Suicide Prevention Action Network USA, a division of AFSP
The National Family Partnership
Therapeutic Communities of America
Treatment Research Institute
Trichotillomania Learning Center
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society
United Neighborhood Centers of America
US Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (USPRA)
Watershed Addiction Treatment Centers
Wellstone Action
Witness Justice

State and Local Organizations

622 Communities Partnership, Inc
A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)
Addiction Resource Council, Inc
Advocates for Recovery – Colorado
Alcohol & Addictions Resource Center
Alcohol & Drug Council of Middle Tennessee
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council For South Louisiana
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of Delaware County, Inc
Alcohol and Substance Abuse Council of Jefferson County, Inc
Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina
Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Council of Orange County
Alcoholism Council of New York, Inc
Alcoholism Council of the Cincinnati Area, NCADD
Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention
ANUVIA Prevention and Recovery Center
Arapahoe House, Inc of Colorado
Association of Alcoholism & Addictions Programs in Washington State
Association of Persons Affected By Addiction
Atlantic Prevention Resources, Inc
Boston Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs, Inc
Bucks County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc
Burke Council on Alcoholism and Chemical Dependency, Inc
California Association of Addiction Recovery Resources (CAARR)
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (CAADAC)
California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives
California Foundation for the Advancement of Addiction Professionals (CFAAP)
Camden County Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse, Inc
Center of Health Care, Bexar County Texas
Central Valley Recovery Services, Inc
CHADD of Grand Rapids, Michigan-Chapter 596
Chautauqua Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Council, Inc
Chestnut Health Systems
Clinical Social Work Guild 49
Colorado Association of Alcohol and Drug Service Providers
Community Alliance on Prisons
Community Prevention Resources of Warren County, Inc
Compass Health Care
Council on Addiction Prevention and Education of Dutchess County, Inc
Council on Addiction Recovery Services, Inc
Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse
Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse of Northwest Louisiana
Council on Alcoholism and Other Chemical Dependencies of the Finger Lakes
Council on Chemical Abuse, Inc
Council on Substance Abuse- NCADD
Councils on Addiction of New York State
County Alcohol & Drug Program Administrators Association of California
CT Association of Nonprofits
Day One
De Paul Treatment Centers, Portland, OR
DePaul's National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-Rochester Area (a long time affiliate of NCADD, Inc)
Drug and Alcohol Service Providers Organization of Pennsylvania
Drug and Alcohol Treatment Association of Rhode Island
Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii
El Paso Alliance
Employee & Family Resources
Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse
Face It! Sioux Falls
Faces and Voices of Recovery SC
Feeling Blue Suicide Prevention Council
Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association
Focus On Community
Friends of Recovery- Vermont (FOR-VT)
G.L.A.D. House, Inc
Gateway Foundation, Inc
H Group
Harbor Hall, Inc
Hepatitis Support Network of Hawaii
HepCats, Oahu's Hepatitis B & C Support Group
HFM Prevention Council
HIV & Hepatitis Co-Infection Program
Hunterdon Prevention Resources
Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association (IADDA)
Impact Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services
Informed Families/The Florida Family Partnership
Join Together Northern Nevada
Kent County Michigan Mental Health Parity Advocacy Coalition
Kingdom Recovery Center, St. Johnsbury, VT
Long Island Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc
Madison County Council on Alcoholism & Substance Abuse, Inc
Maine Association of Substance Abuse Programs
Massage Therapy & Acupressure Healing Arts Center
Mental Health and Substance Abuse Corporations of Massachusetts, Inc
Mental Health Association of DC
Methadone Support Org. (MSO)
Michigan Association of Licensed Substance Abuse Organizations
Micronesian Outreach Healthcare Program
Midwestern Connecticut Council on Alcoholism
Minnesota Association of Resources for Recovery and Chemical Health (MARRCH)
MOAR—Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery
Mohawk Valley Council on Alcohol/Addictions
Morris County Prevention Is Key, Inc
Mountain Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence
Mountain View Prevention Services, Inc
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (NCADA), St. Louis Area
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Central Mississippi Area, Inc
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, East San Gabriel & Pomona Valleys
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Greater Detroit Area
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Greater Manchester
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Greater Phoenix
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Hudson County, Inc
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Illinois
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Kansas City
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Long Beach Area
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Maryland Chapter
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Michigan
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Middlesex County
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, New Jersey
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Northeast Mississippi
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Northwest Florida
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Ohio
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Orange County
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Richmond
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Rochester Area
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Sacramento County, Inc
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Sacramento Region Affiliate
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, San Diego
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, San Fernando Valley, Inc
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Tampa Bay
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, South Bay Area
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Tulare County, Inc
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Westchester
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependencies, Putnam
National Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Addictions, Bay Area
National Council on Alcoholism for Monterey County
National Council on Alcoholism, Juneau
NCA/Lansing Regional Area, Inc
NCADD of Michigan
Nevada AADAPTS
New England Alliance for Addiction Recovery (NEAAR)
Northpointe Council, Inc
O'Brien House Alcohol and Drug Prevention Services
Ohio Citizen Advocates for Chemical Dependency Prevention & Treatment
Ohio Council of Behavioral Health and Family Services Providers
OPERA (Oregon Prevention Education and Recovery Association)
Palladia, Inc
PAR-People Advocating Recovery
Pasadena Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependency
Passaic County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Prevention, Inc
Prevention Plus of Burlington County, Inc
Prison & Outreach Ministries
Prisoner Reintegration & Family Reunification Program
Psychotherapy & Organizational Development, LLC
RASE Project
Recovery Resource Council
Recovery Resources, Inc
Restoring Dignity, Inc
Rhode Island Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependence
Rockland Council on Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependence, Inc
SAARA of Virginia
Schoharie County Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Inc
Seaway Valley Prevention Council
Second Genesis
Signal Behavioral Health Network, Inc
Sojourn House of Freeport IL
South Dakota Council of Mental Health Centers, Inc
South Dakota Council of Substance Abuse Directors
South Suburban Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, East Hazel Crest, IL
Stepping Stone of San Diego
Student Assistance Services Corp
Substance Abuse and Addiction Recovery Alliance of Virginia
Substance Abuse Directors Association of Alaska
Tarzana Treatment Centers
TASC, Inc
The Addictions Care Center of Albany, Inc
The Central Nebraska Council on Alcoholism
The Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse for Greater New Orleans
The Council on Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention of Saratoga County, Inc
The Council on Alcohol and Drugs Houston
The Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse of Sullivan County, Inc/Recovery Center
The Referral Center for Alcohol and Drug Services of Central Oklahoma
Washington Psychiatric Society