Mental Health Liaison Group

February 19, 2015

President Barack Obama Vice President Joe Biden

The White House The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20501 Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. President and Vice President:

On behalf of the millions of Americans living with mental and substance use disorders, their families and communities, the undersigned mental health organizations want to thank you, Vice President Biden and your Administration for including in your FY2016 Budget the elimination of the Medicare 190-day lifetime limit, which limits Medicare beneficiaries to just 190 days of inpatient psychiatric hospital care during their lifetime.

The Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG), a coalition of national organizations representing consumers, parents and family members, advocates, providers, and mental health experts, is dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

In the FY2016 Budget you propose to eliminate the discrimination against mental illnesses that continues to exist in the Medicare program as Medicare beneficiaries are still limited to 190-days of inpatient psychiatric care during their lifetime. There is no such lifetime limit for any other Medicare specialty inpatient hospital service.

Through passage of *Affordable Care Act of 2010* and the *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008*, coverage for mental health and addictive disorders is now required to be on par with other medical disorders. We must now finally give Medicare beneficiaries the full parity that other individuals now have under the law.

The elimination of the 190-day limit will equalize Medicare mental health coverage with private health insurance coverage, offer beneficiaries the choice of inpatient psychiatric care providers, increase access for the most seriously ill, improve continuity of care and create a more cost-effective Medicare program.

Mr. President, MHLG thanks you for your leadership and stands ready to work with you and the Administration to eliminate this discrimination against Medicare beneficiaries with mental health and substance use disorders. We invite you to contact our MHLG Steering Committee member, Nancy Trenti at 202/393-6700 with comments or with questions.

Sincerely,

 [Alliance for Strong Families and Communities](http://www.alliance1.org)

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

 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 Nurses Association

American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

American Group Psychotherapy Association

American Psychiatric Association

American Psychiatric Nurses Association

American Psychoanalytic Association

American Psychological Association

 American Orthopsychiatric Association

Anxiety and Depression Association of America

Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Clinical Social Work Association

Clinical Social Work Guild

Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

 Families USA

Mental Health America

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association for Children's Behavioral Health

National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors

National Association of Anorexia and Associated Disorders, ANAD

National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems

National Association of Social Workers

 National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, (NASMHPD)

National Council for Behavioral Health

 National Disability Rights Network

 National League for Nursing
National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health

No Health without Mental Health

Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America

NJ Society for Clinical Social Work, CSW Guild 49 OPEIU-AFL-CIO\*\*

The Jewish Federations of North America

The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health

cc: Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

 *\* MHLG Observer*

*\*\* not a MHLG member*