



National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors

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Robert W. Glover, Ph.D.
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NASMHPD

January 13, 2009

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

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

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

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

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Representative Boehner:

The members of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) urge Congress to reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and send bipartisan legislation to the President for his approval as early as possible. This action would signal to the American public that the nation's children and their health are top priorities of the 111th Congress and the new President.

Without the SCHIP program, the growing numbers of uninsured would be even greater than the current 46 million. Covering children is a wise health care investment at all times but especially now when families are losing coverage due to unemployment. This legislation ensures coverage for 11 million children, extending coverage to 4 million who were previously uninsured. The bill also ensures that plans will cover mental health on par with medical and surgical benefits which is in keeping with the recent enactment mental health parity for private plans (including Medicaid Managed Care plans). Since mental disorders affect about one in five American children and serious mental illnesses become evident on average at age 14, parity protections will enhance prevention and early intervention, resulting in a wise investment of health care dollars.

Thank you for considering our views,

Robert W. Glover, PhD
Executive Director