The Nation's Voice on Mental Illness

April 10, 2008

The Honorable Jay Rockefeller
United States Senate
531 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Dingell:

On behalf of the 210,000 members and 1,200 affiliates of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing to express strong support for S 2819, your legislation to provide fiscal relief to states and impose moratoria on regulations issued by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that would devastate critical services under the Medicaid program. NAMI strongly supports this important effort to prevent reductions in critical community-based services for Medicaid beneficiaries living with mental illness. As the nation's largest organization representing individuals with severe mental illness and their families, NAMI is pleased to support this important measure.

As you know, Medicaid is the single largest source of funding for America's public mental health system. Medicaid rehabilitative services and Targeted Case Management (TCM) combine to produce more than 50 percent of all federal funding for community-based services for people living with serious mental illnesses and other disabilities. Rehabilitative services are designed to assist in the recovery of children and adults with serious mental illness. These services are essential to allowing people with mental illness reduce their dependence on inpatient services and emphasize recovery and independence. Unfortunately, regulations put forward by CMS – in several instances without authority from Congress – would severely impair the ability of states to fund these critical services.

It is critical that these devastating regulations be stopped. Likewise, it is important for Congress to step forward and provide fiscal relief for states through a temporary increase the Medicaid federal match rate. States are already beginning to face revenue shortfalls and the Medicaid program is especially vulnerable for reductions. It is critical that states be provided with assistance to avoid cuts to the most vulnerable Medicaid beneficiaries.

NAMI looks forward to working with you to ensure passage of S 2819 and protection of the Medicaid program as a vital safety net for children and adults with serious mental illness.

Sincerely,

Michael Fitzpatrick, M.S.W.
Executive Director

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