

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0506

May 17, 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independent Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

As recent events have shown, we can no longer afford to ignore mental health in this nation. I applaud President Obama's Executive Action, in which he committed to finalizing all regulations pursuant to the *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)* which Congress passed in 2008. Accordingly, I respectfully urge you to expeditiously issue a final rule to provide much needed certainty and access to vital mental health and substance abuse services.

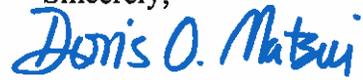
Despite the law passing nearly five years ago, consumers still face barriers accessing the mental health and substance abuse services they need. The lack of final guidance has resulted in significant confusion regarding insurer and employer responsibilities under the law, which currently impacts 140 million Americans receiving health coverage through their employers. This problem will only be exacerbated if guidance is not issued before an additional 32 million Americans become newly eligible for health care in 2014 under the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

Recently, I have hosted a number of local mental health discussions with local, state and federal mental health care leaders and advocates. The participants of these roundtables have reiterated the importance of fully implementing MHPAEA and fostering coordination of care. Once these long-awaited regulations are released, the American people will have the regulatory certainty needed to ensure that health plans do not impose unduly restrictive or costly financial burdens on mental health and substance abuse disorders relative to comparable medical and surgical benefits.

The lack of implementing the final rule has placed an undue burden on patients and our health care system. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) own reporting shows that nearly half of those with severe mental health disorders are not receiving treatment. Approximately 70 % of Emergency Departments in our nation are boarding mental health patients for more than 24 hours. Over 25% of our veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan experience some type of mental health condition. We must not wait any longer to implement the MHPAEA.

Thank you for your commitment to addressing this important issue and I look forward to working with you to ensure that all American's are able to access all medical care afforded them under the law.

Sincerely,



DORIS O. MATSUI
Member of Congress