



MICHIGAN
PARTNERS
FOR PARITY

Honorable Senators and Representatives:

We write to state our support for ending discrimination and inequality in medical care for **all** of Michigan's citizens with mental, emotional or developmental disorders. We believe this can only be accomplished by enacting comprehensive, broad-based **mental health insurance parity legislation** in Michigan.

The pain felt by individuals and families experiencing autism is heartbreaking. If Michigan already had a general mental health parity law and that statute were not strong enough to protect persons with autism, we would advocate correcting that form of discrimination. **But Michigan is one of only seven states without a general mental health parity law.** All mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and addictions are real medical conditions with neurological, neurochemical and genetic bases. Simply calling one brain disorder a "biologically-based, neurological disorder" does not make it more valid, more responsive to treatment or more cost-effective to treat than others. We all should be aware that in trying to avoid the societal stigma attached with these conditions, we can contribute to it.

The Partners for Parity coalition has existed for over a dozen years and has worked to refine the language of the pending parity bills to address concerns raised. We have always promoted the bills as providing much-needed coverage for autism, and we have always been willing to clarify this point as necessary.

The lack of insurance parity for all mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and substance use disorders perpetuates the discrimination against over one million Michigan citizens. We believe comprehensive parity bills better address that discrimination – and better promote and protect the public's health – than do bills targeting a single condition from the array of mental disorders. **In addition, many states and the federal parity law demonstrate that parity can be effectively achieved without a mandate.**

Legislators now have the opportunity to see that autism gets the coverage it needs as well as equally important anti-discrimination protection for other brain disorders.

The premium cost impact of parity has been actuarially established, projected by the Congressional Budget Office, and confirmed by the experience of **43 states** and ten years of the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program to be less than one-half of 1%. **We can afford to provide equal coverage for all children.**

We can't afford to pick winners and losers among Michigan's children.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our views.

--The Sixty-four Organizational Members of Partners for Parity



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Michigan Partners for Parity

American Academy of Pediatricians-MI
AFSCME Council 25—MI Chapter
Agoraphobics in Motion (AIM)
Alliance for Mental Health Services
Association of Behavioral Healthcare of Michigan
Association for Children’s Mental Health
Association for Licensed Substance Abuse
Organizations
Birmingham Maple Clinic
CHADD Michigan
The Comfort Zone
Common Ground Sanctuary
Community Connections of SW Michigan
Consumer Advisory Council, Washtenaw Community
Health Organization
Council of Catholic Women, Archdiocese of Detroit
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance-Grand
Rapids
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance-Metro
Detroit
Elder Law & Disability Rights Section, State Bar of
Michigan
Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan
Grand Rapids Children and Adults with Attention
Deficit Disorder
International Association for Psychosocial
Rehabilitation Services, Michigan Chapter
Kadima
Katherine’s Quality Cleaning Service
League of Women Voters of Michigan
Mental Health Association in Michigan
Michigan Association for Children with Emotional
Disorders
Michigan Association of Alcoholism and Drug
Abuse Counselors
Michigan Association of Community Mental Health
Boards
Michigan Association of Program Directors of
Substance Abuse
Michigan Association of School Psychologists
Michigan Association of School Social Workers
Michigan Association of Substance Abuse
Coordinating Agencies
Michigan Association of Suicidology
Michigan CAT
Michigan Council for Maternal and Child Health
Michigan Counseling Association
Michigan Disability Rights Coalition
Michigan Federation for Children and Families
Michigan Jewish Conference
Michigan League for Human Services
Michigan Legal Services
Michigan Mental Health Consumers Forum
Michigan Nurses Association
Michigan Occupational Therapy Association
Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc.
Michigan Psychiatric Society
Michigan Psychoanalytic Society
Michigan Psychological Association
Michigan Rehabilitation Association
Michigan Society of Addiction Medicine
Michigan State Medical Society
Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network
Michigan Women Psychologists
Ministry in Mental Illness, Webster Church UCC,
Dexter
National Alliance on Mental Illness for the State of
Michigan
National Association of Social Workers—Michigan
Chapter
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug
Dependence of Michigan
Oakland County Council for Children and Adults
with Psychiatric Disabilities
Proaction Behavioral Health Alliance
Rose Hill Center
R&S Foods, Inc.
School-Community Health Alliance of Michigan
Society for Social Work Leadership in Health Care
West Michigan Addiction Consultants, P.C.