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APA Statement: Mental Health Parity: A Win for Patients

ARLINGTON, Va. (Oct. 6, 2008) — The American Psychiatric Association congratulates Congress for passing and the president for signing legislation that will provide equal access to millions of Americans who seek treatment for mental illnesses.

Enactment of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, included within the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, H.R. 1424, ensures that coverage of mental health treatment will now be on par with coverage for other health conditions.

“This is an historic day that patients, psychiatrists and other mental health providers have long awaited,” said APA President Nada L. Stotland, M.D., M.P.H. “This legislation is a reflection of the American public’s recognition that mental illnesses are real and treatable and that fair coverage is to everyone’s benefit.”

The legislation, passed by the Senate early last week and by the House of Representatives on Friday, will improve coverage for 113 million people, including 82 million in employer-sponsored plans that are not subject to state regulation. The bill ensures equal coverage for mental health services with other medical and surgical benefits.

The American Psychiatric Association is the nation’s leading medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

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