



**For Information Contact:**

Eve Herold, 703-907-8640

[press@psych.org](mailto:press@psych.org)

Jaime Valora, 703-907-8562

[jvalora@psych.org](mailto:jvalora@psych.org)

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## **APA Reminds President Obama and Congressional Leadership of Health Care Reform Provisions Important to its Members and their Patients**

**ARLINGTON, Va. (March 12, 2010)** – The American Psychiatric Association sent a letter to President Obama and the Congressional leadership this week expressing support for their efforts to pass health reform legislation this year, as well as recommending specific provisions to the final health care reform legislation that are critical to its members and the patients that they treat.

In the letter, the APA listed two provisions as essential to advancing mental health parity and supporting the needs of its patients: requiring a basic benefit package for all qualified health benefit plans in the Health Insurance Exchange, including mental health and substance-use disorder treatment; and extending this coverage requirement to all health insurance plans within five years.

“We understand that reforming our nation’s health system is a complex process and that it is not possible to have a ‘perfect’ reform bill that pleases everyone,” explained APA President Alan F. Schatzberg, M.D. “However, it’s essential to our patients that the recent advances of mental health parity are included in the final legislation that reaches the president.”

In addition, Schatzberg, who signed the letter, strongly urged President Obama, Majority Leader Harry Reid and Speaker Nancy Pelosi to include the following recommendations in the final health reform package:

- **Medicare Physician Payment:** The APA urged the inclusion of Medicare payment reform as a central part of any health reform package. The APA believes H.R. 3961, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform Act, which the House passed in November, is the model legislation to end the cycle of debt caused by the flawed Sustainable Growth Rate formula. The bill will also ensure fair and sustainable payment for Medicare physicians and continued access to a broad range of needed services for Medicare beneficiaries.
- **Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB):** The APA urged that the IPAB not be included in the final legislation, as decisions made by the IPAB will negatively affect physicians whose patients rely on Medicare. The IPAB has exempted hospitals and other health-related entities from cuts for the first four years, leaving Medicare savings to be levied entirely on physicians and other health practitioners who are already subject to a spending target under the flawed physician payment formula.
- **Public Reporting on Performance Information:** The APA supports the removal of any provision that allows information to be released to the public about patients’ feedback on a physician’s practice. Inaccurate data could harm a physician’s reputation and practice.

- **Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI):** The APA supports the House language that does not mandate physician participation in PQRI. Mandatory participation raises concerns as the voluntary quality reporting program now in place has highlighted technical problems, such as long gaps that occur when physicians report. In many cases, they are notified that the reporting was not successful.

“We urge you to regard these changes as essential to reforming our nation’s health insurance system,” Schatzberg concluded in the letter. “We recognize the continuing challenges for developing a comprehensive health reform plan and appreciate all of your efforts to secure enactment of this crucial legislation.”

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org), [www.HealthyMinds.org](http://www.HealthyMinds.org) and <http://www.psychiatryonline.com/>.

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