

MMA STATEMENT

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MMA PHYSICIANS SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH PARITY ACT

The Minnesota Medical Association, a professional association representing more than 10,000 physicians throughout the state, strongly supports the Mental Health Parity Act, which would end the discriminatory treatment of mental health in this country.

MMA physicians believe that health plans should be required to cover mental health illness and substance abuse treatment on in the same terms and conditions as all other illnesses.

The Mental Health Parity legislation would end insurer discrimination against the more than 113 million Americans who suffer from mental illnesses, including the nearly 82 million covered under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act who are unable to benefit from state parity laws, such as Minnesota's.

Patients with mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, or substance-use disorders, who do not have the protection of state parity laws, often are charged higher co-payments and deductibles than those with other illnesses and injuries, and many are allowed fewer doctor visits or days in the hospital. This can be a barrier to receiving care.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, mental illnesses—when left untreated—can cost society more than \$200 billion each year. The National Institute on Drug Abuse stated that the costs attributable to substance-use disorders exceed \$500 billion annually.

Treatment success rates for mental disorders are often higher than rates for the treatment of chronic physical illnesses. The National Institute of Mental Health has found that treatment of depression carries a success rate as high as 80 percent, exceeding the treatment success rates for many non-psychiatric medical conditions.

The physicians of the MMA strongly support extending the parity enjoyed in Minnesota, to patients across the country.