



# CALIFORNIA COALITION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

June 5, 2009

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy California Division  
California Alliance of Child and Family Services  
California Association of Health Facilities  
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists  
California Association of Mental Health Patients Rights Advocates  
California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies  
California Council of Community Mental Health Agencies  
California Hospital Association  
California Institute for Mental Health  
California Mental Health Advocates for Children and Youth  
California Mental Health Directors Association  
California Mental Health Planning Council  
California Network of Mental Health Clients  
California Primary Care Association  
California Psychiatric Association  
California Psychological Association  
California Society for Clinical Social Work  
California Women's Mental Health Policy Council  
Disability Rights California  
Mental Health Association in California  
Mental Health Association of Santa Barbara  
NAMI California  
National Association of Social Workers, California Chapter  
Occupational Therapy Association of California, Inc.  
Orange County Coalition for Mental Health  
San Diego Coalition for Mental Health  
Service Employees International Union, Local 1021  
Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network, California  
United Advocates for Children and Families

The Honorable Noreen Evans  
California State Assembly  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Deliberations by Budget Conference Committee

Dear Assembly Member Evans:

On behalf of the over thirty statewide mental health legislative advocacy organizations in California, we wish to express our strong opposition to the cuts under consideration that would decimate the safety net for the people who need it the most: the elderly, the mentally and physically disabled, children, the disabled, and low-income families and individuals.

We know the Conference Budget Committee has difficult choices to make this year. But it makes no sense to drive more people into poverty and into life and death situations. This is the time when government should be more compassionate and help those many people who, through no fault of their own, are simply trying to survive another day, feed their families, continue their education, and trying to afford prescriptions and medical treatment to keep themselves alive and off the street.

As for mental health, we know for a fact that if you do not treat the physical side of a mentally ill patient along with the behavioral side, the patient will never get better. Indeed, the average mentally ill patient dies 25 years sooner than the average American citizen. So while we focus on mental health programs, we also know that if we let the physical side crumble, our patients will fall into the holes the state government is digging and they will never climb out of them.

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In conclusion, we are not taking sides as to Republicans or Democrats or Independents or conservatives or liberals or moderates. But we are speaking for those people who lack a voice in Sacramento. Do not turn your backs on the people who need your help now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Riemersma". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Mary Riemersma  
President