

Sample Letter to a Legislator

(Courtesy of the National Mental Health Association)

Although the sample letter below discusses mental health parity, which has been passed in the State of California, the structure of the letter represents how an effective letter should be organized: (1) Identify the specific purpose of the letter and your position, (2) offer evidence of why the legislator should support/sponsor the legislation at hand, and (3) accomplish both tasks in a concise but highly informative manner.

(DATE)

The Honorable _____

(State Capital)

(City/State/Zip Code)

Dear Assemblyperson/Senator _____:

As (INCLUDE PERSONAL NAME, TITLE, AND NAME OF ORGANIZATION/COALITION), I am writing to respectfully request that you (SUPPORT/SPONSOR) (BILL NAME OR NUMBER). This bill would provide comprehensive mental health insurance parity for all persons with mental health treatment needs in (YOUR STATE).

Each year, mental illness strikes one in every five Americans. These disorders are very real and just as treatable as physical ailments. In fact, empirical research has shown that treatment efficacy for mental disorders is favorable when compared to treatment for common physical illnesses.

Mental health insurance parity is sound social policy and makes good economic sense. A recent study by the National Institute of Mental Health on the actual financial impact in states that have recently enacted mental health parity (i.e. North Carolina, Texas, Connecticut and Rhode Island) found decreases in overall healthcare costs with only minimum increases in insurance premiums for mental health benefits. In addition, Maryland, Minnesota, and Vermont have enacted comprehensive mental health parity legislation without resulting in significant cost increases. Finally, it is important to note that “biologically-based brain diseases” account for 90 percent of the costs of a typical state parity bill. Therefore, for a minimal extra expense, it makes the most sense to enact a comprehensive parity bill covering all persons who have mental health treatment needs.

This bill represents a historic opportunity both to help the people of (YOUR STATE) and to set a positive example for the rest of the nation. Presently, 32 states have already enacted some form of legislation to guarantee that the mental health needs of their citizens are covered equitably. (YOUR STATE) is in a position to end insurance discrimination against its citizens suffering from mental health problems, lower healthcare costs, and improve quality and access to treatment. I strongly encourage you to do so now by (SUPPORTING/SPONSORING) (NAME/NUMBER OF THE BILL).

Sincerely,

(NAME)

(TITLE)

(ADDRESS- If not on Letterhead).