Mental Health Liaison Group

April 10, 2015

The Honorable Rob Portman
U.S Senate
448 Russell Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senate
702 Hart Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senators Portman and Heinrich:

The undersigned national organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, providers and professionals are pleased to express support for the Medical Evaluation Parity for Service Members (MEPS) Act (S. 646). As organizations that advocate for improved access to mental health and addiction services, including screening, assessment, early intervention, treatment and rehabilitation services and supports for Americans, we applaud your leadership in introducing legislation that promotes the mental health of our nation's servicemembers.

The MEPS would require the Department of Defense to screen military recruits for mental health disorders, as it routinely does for physical health conditions, and to review its ability to issue electronic health records for use by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other healthcare entities when servicemembers depart active duty.

A recent US Army study found that about 20% of Army recruits have mental health disorders, and half of soldiers who have attempted suicide first did so before joining the Army. In addition, research has shown that repeated overseas deployments, such has occurred recently rather frequently, increase servicemembers' likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Your commitment to improving our Nation's military capability and the quality of life for our servicemembers, their families, and their fellow military members is commendable, and we thank you for undertaking such a goal. We believe the MEPS will aid substantially in early detection and treatment of mental health conditions in

servicemembers, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your staff to help enact this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
American Association of Pastoral Counselors
American Counseling Association
American Dance Therapy Association
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA
American Group Psychotherapy Association
American Mental Health Counselors Association
American Nurses Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Psychoanalytic Association
American Psychological Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Clinical Social Work Association
Clinical Social Work Guild
Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action
NAADAC, The Association for Addiction Professionals
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Children's Behavioral Health
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders (ANAD)
National Association of Counties *
National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Disability Rights Network
National League for Nursing
No Health without Mental Health
Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America
The National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
The Trevor Project
Tourette Syndrome Association
Treatment Communities of America

*MHLG observer