

Judge David L.

BAZELON CENTER

for Mental Health Law

NEWS

Bazelon Center Congratulates U.S. House on Passing the Affordable Health Care for America Act

Washington, DC - November 9, 2009, - The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law congratulates the 220 members of the U.S. House of Representatives who cast a historic vote approving the Affordable Health Care for America Act, H.R. 3962 on Saturday, November 7, 2009. "The vote puts Congress closer to extending affordable, quality health care, including mental health services at parity, to millions of Americans," said Laurel Stine, director of Federal Relations for the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

"We thank the House leadership, committee chairs and legislators who worked tirelessly to ensure meaningful reforms to our health care delivery system," Stine added. "They could have left in place - and thankfully did not - a system where health care costs continue to climb and millions of Americans lack appropriate, early and continuing care.

"We commend the House for sharing our vision of improved integration of mental health with other health care through expanded access, greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention, better management of chronic illness and improved quality of care.

"The Affordable Health Care for America Act includes a host of reforms that are critical to guaranteeing access to health and mental health services for Americans. These include requiring that mental health and substance abuse benefits be provided and at parity with other health care, prohibiting insurance companies from denying coverage for pre-existing conditions like mental illnesses, charging different premiums based on health status and other risk factors, and barring annual and lifetime dollar limits on receiving care," said Stine.

"In particular," she added, "by extending Medicaid to individuals with a family income of up to 150% of the federal poverty level, including single childless adults, many of whom have severe mental disabilities, the House confirms the value of the Medicaid program to give low-income, vulnerable Americans the comprehensive services and supports they need to get better and to live happy, healthy and productive lives.

"We look forward to working with Congress to pass a comprehensive health care bill toward the end of the year. Now is the time to make a difference in the lives of millions of Americans and to secure a healthy future for our country," said Stine.

For links to the bill and a summary of how it would affect mental health coverage, visit the Bazelon Center's [web page on health care reform](#).