

FACES & VOICES OF RECOVERY
ADDICTION RECOVERY INSURANCE EQUITY CAMPAIGN
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The letters to the editor section of your local paper is a great forum for getting our message out to local citizens, elected officials and other members of the media. More people read the letters to the editor section than almost any other part of the paper. Letters to the editor show that an issue is of concern to the community and are an excellent tool for education.

Here are a few guidelines for getting your letter to the editor printed:

- Before writing your letter, review the newspaper's policy on letters to the editor. It is frequently available on the newspaper's web site under the Opinion section.
- Submit your letter by e-mail whenever possible. (Look for the e-mail address on the newspaper's web site).
- Don't forget to send your letter to weekly community newspapers as well as daily newspapers.
- You must include your name, street address and phone number. Editors will not run anonymous letters and will often contact you to verify that you wrote your letter.
- Type the letter – double spaced.
- Don't be disappointed if your letter doesn't get printed. Newspapers get many letters every day and can't print them all. Look for another opportunity to submit your letter, using a different angle.

SAMPLE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Use these sample letters to the editor (one for family members and one for individuals in recovery) as a model to send your own letter. Add information about yourself and your community or information about whether or not your member of Congress is supporting H.R. 1424 to personalize your letter to the editor about ending insurance discrimination. If your letter gets published, please email us at info@facesandvoicesofrecovery.org.

Sample Letter to the Editor – Family Member

To the Editor:

(INSERT ONE SENTENCE HERE ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL STORY - Example: Having lost my 20-year-old son to drug addiction or Having had to pay out of our own pockets to get our son or daughter the help that he or she needed), I know that we can't wait any longer to require insurance companies to pay the same benefits for mental health and addiction care as they do for other health care.

There's a growing likelihood for change this year if Congress passes and President Bush signs the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007. Long championed by Rep. Jim Ramstad (R-MN) and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), the bill will make it possible for hundreds of thousands of people to get the help they need, restoring the lives of families and communities and saving taxpayer dollars.

Ending insurance discrimination makes sense and it would be cost effective. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has estimated the annual economic cost of alcohol and other drug problems alone in the US to be more than \$400 billion. It's time to spend our money wisely and invest in opportunities for even more of our friends and neighbors to recover from addiction.

Your name, organization (if any), address, phone number

Sample Letter to the Editor – Person in Recovery

To the Editor:

I am one of the millions of Americans who are no longer using alcohol and other drugs and am in long-term recovery from addiction. Unfortunately there are far too many other people who need help to get on with their lives but can't get it. They are our moms and dads, friends and neighbors, who face discrimination from their health insurance companies just when they need help the most.

After years of leading the fight for insurance equity on Capitol Hill, Reps. Jim Ramstad (R-MN) and Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) have traveled the country speaking out about the "Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007." They heard powerful stories of the devastation caused by insurance discrimination to them and their families and the need for Congress to enact H.R. 1424 this year.

Making it possible for more people to get help with their addiction is a bi-partisan issue. Let your elected officials know that ending insurance discrimination will make a difference in our community. It's very likely someone you know needs help and can't get it.

Your name, organization (if any), address, phone number.