

FLOOR STATEMENT ON H.R. 6983, "THE PAUL WELLSTONE AND PETE DOMENICI MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008"

I rise in support of H.R. 6983, the "Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008," which will permanently reauthorize and improve the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996. This legislation will put mental illness and substance-related disorders on the same footing as other medical and surgical disorders for health insurance benefits.

FLOOR STATEMENT

ON H.R. 6983, THE "PAUL WELLSTONE AND PETE DOMENICI MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008";

September 23, 2008

I rise in support of H.R. 6983, the "Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008," which will permanently reauthorize and improve the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996. This legislation will put mental illness and substance-related disorders on the same footing as other medical and surgical disorders for health insurance benefits.

Mental illness and addiction can have a significant effect on an individual's life and well-being. Millions of Americans are challenged by serious mental health conditions which are the leading cause of disability in the United States for individuals between the ages of 15 and 44. Mental health and addiction disorders can be as painful and debilitating as those of a medical and surgical nature, and as such, should be treated equally. The strains of these illnesses affect individuals, families, and society as a whole. Ensuring appropriate parity in cost sharing, treatment limitations, and out of network benefits should be an important priority.

In accordance with PAYGO rules, this bill is paid for with a worldwide interest allocation tax provision that delays a tax break for American companies that operate overseas.

This bipartisan agreement is supported by mental health advocacy groups such as Mental Health America, consumer

groups such as Consumer's Union, providers such as the American Medical Association, insurers such as American Managed Behavioral Healthcare Association and others.

I commend my distinguished colleagues, Representatives Kennedy and Ramstad and Senators Kennedy and Domenici for their tireless efforts in crafting this important piece of legislation. They have been unwavering in their commitment to end the discrimination against those with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill, as it will create true parity of coverage for mental health and substance abuse disorders.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515