



In addition health plans shall also provide coverage on a nondiscriminatory basis for children and adolescents up to the age of 21 for the diagnosis and treatment of any mental disorders, as described in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood.

This legislation continues the commitment Massachusetts has made to improving the quality and accessibility of healthcare. While former Governor Romney proposed stripping new health plans of state mandates, the legislature insisted that as we expand coverage to the uninsured, all plans must provide comprehensive quality care. By passing H1871, the legislature continues its historic role in protecting access to mental health and substance abuse treatment.

We applaud Senator Ted Kennedy whose mental health parity legislation passed the US Senate unanimously on September 18. This historic bill when passed by the house will cover those people in self-insured plans as well as all federal health insurance plans. H1871 supports Senator Kennedy's efforts by showing the nation that his own state has a model statute, and complements it as it requires the same coverage for state-regulated policies, that his bill would require for federally-regulated policies.

Mental health parity fights stigma against people who have a mental illness. It saves the corporations money through greater productivity of the employee, and saves the state money. It furthers the Massachusetts commitment to increasing access to comprehensive health care for all the people of Massachusetts.

We urge that this bill be reported favorably by the committee.

Thank you for your attention.