

NLWJC - Kagan

DPC - Box 030 - Folder 003

Health - Mental Health Parity

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Q: WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO ROBERT PEAR'S STORY ABOUT THE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY REGULATION?

A: This Administration has an unparalleled record of supporting ending discrimination in mental health. First, the portability provisions in the Kassebaum-Kennedy legislation represented a major victory for mental health advocates as it explicitly prevents insurers from using preexisting conditions as a basis for excluding people with mental illnesses from access to health plans. Secondly, we fought for and secured the passage of the mental health parity provisions that are discussed in today's story. And this year in the balanced budget act we worked hard to ensure that a strong mental health provision was included in the children's health initiative.

With regard to the mental health parity law discussed in today's story, no decisions have made in any interpretation of the law. The three departments (HHS, Labor, and Treasury) that are responsible for administering this regulation have not made any decisions much less forwarded any recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget. Even when they do, OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs must review and make a final determination on the appropriate interpretation and implementation of the law by the Administration.

Clearly, because of our longstanding commitment to mental health care, we will do everything possible to ensure that this law is implemented in a way that ensures that the promise of the legislation is real.