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Request for Information Regarding the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

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Request for Information Regarding the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

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General Comment

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Act. In advancing the idea that mental illness is an illness like any other the Act supports the fundamental belief that mental illness is not something to be ashamed of, does not consist of various character defects and cannot be cured by being a stronger person/walking it off/acting like a man (or woman) or just straightening up and acting right.

I have two individuals in my life currently that suffer from this dreadful condition. One is fairly competent, lives an organized but sad life, has always held down a job and supported herself in spite of her delusions and depression. The other is a much more tragic case.

Her family labors under the delusion that if she would just 'act right' everything would be fine. She is, however an extreme case of bipolar disorder that has been resistant to medications, so far. She is always paranoid, even under medication, does not believe she has a problem at all in fact. Her life has been a see-saw of taking medication, stopping medication, crashing, acting out, police, incarceration, hospitalization, taking medication. A cycle that is all too familiar to many with loved ones who suffer.

So much of this would be mitigated by a healthcare community that recognizes the biological basis for her disease and accepts her as blameless in a battle with her own body. No one blames a diabetic that has a hypoglycemic episode and freaks out, yelling, angry, even violent. There is a basic recognition by the healthcare community that the objective is to keep the patient from hurting themselves and others while administering treatment that will cure the root cause.

While the manifestations of mental disease are erroneously contributed to personality, choice, the way they are, conscious desire to be that way, the goal of an enlightened society that recognizes the biological basis of mental disease will try to keep the patient safe from harming themselves or others and administering treatment that cures the root cause.

With the additional coverage that this Act provides people can seek help that will address the root cause of their problem the same as they would seek treatment for diabetes, hypertension or any of a host of physical ailments. It also goes a long way toward fostering a change on our perception as a society that mental illness is all in the mind to one that recognizes the physical and biological sources of these devastating diseases.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.