

## Calls On Lawmakers to Expand Legislation to Include Drug and Alcohol Dependency

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NAADAC, the National Association for Addiction Professionals, today urged President Bush to endorse HR 4066, The Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act of 2002, which seeks parity in health insurance coverage for mental health with other medical conditions. The organization called the legislation a "good first step in achieving parity of coverage for substance abuse treatment."

HR 4066 was introduced by Representatives Marge Roukema (R- NJ) and Patrick Kennedy (D-RI). In a letter sent today to the White House, NAADAC states, "We commend the President for his April 29, 2002, support for the concept of equal treatment for mental and physical illness. We urge him to endorse HR 4066, as written. Roukema-Kennedy, similar to Domenici-Wellstone in the Senate is already a compromise. Further erosion of the impact of this bill is unacceptable."

"We are disappointed that this legislation specifically excludes treatment for chemical dependency, which research shows is a brain disease," said NAADAC Executive Director Pat Ford-Roegner. "But we recognize that this is an important first step in helping people suffering from drug or alcohol addiction get the health coverage they need for treatment. President Bush's endorsement of mental health parity will help to reduce the stigma inhibiting treatment for brain disorders. While NAADAC does endorse HR 4066, we question the effectiveness of any legislation that does not address America's number one public health problem- The Disease of Addiction."

"NAADAC members are trained clinical specialists who treat individuals and families suffering with alcohol and drug problems, many of their clients suffer from co-occurring disorders, like depression and alcoholism. We support HR 4066 because it will go a long way to ease the suffering of patients and their families, but it will not help people diagnosed only with chemical dependency. Unequal health benefits suggest that addiction is not an illness," said John Avery, NAADAC's Director of Public Policy.