The Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act

117th Congress
House Sponsors: Reps. Paul Tonko (D-NY) & Bill Huizenga (R-MI)
Senate Sponsors: Sens. Susan Collins (R-ME) & Tina Smith (D-MN)

“Through the Mental Health Parity Act, we recognize that all illnesses, including those that affect the brain, should have equal coverage in our nation.”
❖ Paul Tonko

Access to mental health care for seniors is critical

- At least 1 in 4 seniors experience some mental disorder, such as depression, anxiety, or dementia.
- Due to population aging, the number of seniors with mental illness is expected to double by 2030.
- Treating depression in older adults is important since it impacts many physical conditions including heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.
- About 26 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries experience some sort of mental disorder, according to estimates by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).
- According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the U.S. loses approximately $100 billion annually from lost productivity due to untreated mental illness.

Yet stigma continues to prevent lifesaving care

- Today, despite the enactment of the landmark Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, Medicare continues to discriminate against seniors with mental illnesses.
- Medicare has a 190-day lifetime limit on inpatient psychiatric hospital services, regardless of the patients’ needs.
  - This limit does not apply to psychiatric units in general hospitals and there is no such lifetime limit for any other Medicare specialty inpatient hospital service.
- In addition to impacting seniors, this arbitrary limit disproportionately harms individuals who get Medicare coverage earlier in life due to disability, many of whom are managing mental illness.

Congress Can Make a Difference!

The Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act of 2021

❖ Brings us closer to mental health parity by eliminating the 190-day lifetime limit on inpatient psychiatric hospital services under the Medicare Program.
❖ Removes harmful stigma surrounding mental illness while bringing Medicare policy in line with private insurance policies that have long since removed this unjust, antiquated limit.
❖ Increases access for the seriously ill, improves continuity of care for many of America’s seniors and increases cost effectiveness of Medicare.

Congress has a duty to ensure our seniors are given the mental health care and support they need.
Now is the time to act!

Connect with Congressman Paul Tonko on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram: @RepPaulTonko