



WOMEN SENATORS FROM ACROSS THE NATION UNITE TO INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO COMBAT EATING DISORDERS

Press Release

Executive Circle

Avalon Hills
Eating Recovery Center
The Emily Program
The Emily Program Foundation
Kantor & Kantor, LLP
Oliver-Pyatt Centers
Residential Eating Disorders Consortium

Policy Circle

Academy for Eating Disorders
The Renfrew Center
Veritas Collaborative

Leadership Circle

Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness
Gail R. Schoenbach FREED Foundation
Monte Nido Treatment Center
Reasons Eating Disorder Center
Remuda Ranch

Advocacy Circle

International Association of Eating
Disorders Professionals Foundation
Laureate Eating Disorders Program
Timberline Knolls

Support Circle

Cambridge Eating Disorder Center
Center for Discovery
Eating Disorder Hope
Eating Disorder Center of Denver
The Eating Disorders Center at Rogers
Memorial Hospital
Focus Treatment Centers
Inner Door Center
Multi-Services Eating Disorders Association
Park Nicollet Melrose Center
Rosewood Centers for Eating Disorders
Walden Behavioral Care
Wrobel & Smith, PLLP

Hope Circle

American Anorexia and Bulimia Association
of Philadelphia
BingeBehavior.com
Casa Palmera
Eating Disorder Coalition of Iowa (EDCI)
EDN of Maryland
FEAST
FINDINGbalance
Gurze Books
The International Federation of Eating
Disorders Dietitians
McCallum Place
The National Association of Anorexia
Nervosa and Associated Eating Disorders
PENED/Footsteps for Recovery

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

***Sen. Klobuchar [D-MN], Sen. Ayotte [R-NH], Sen. Capito [R-WV]
and Sen. Baldwin [D-WI] Introduce the Anna Westin Act of 2015***

Washington, D.C. July 28, 2015 – Yesterday afternoon a group of women Senators stood up for people experiencing eating disorders by introducing the Anna Westin Act of 2015. Led by Senators Amy Klobuchar [D-MN] and Kelly Ayotte [R-NH], with strong original support and leadership from Senators Tammy Baldwin [D-WI] and Shelley Moore Capito [R-WV], the Anna Westin Act of 2015 is the first-ever Senate eating disorders-specific legislation to receive bipartisan support at introduction. The new bill was written to help the estimated 30 million Americans suffering from eating disorders throughout the United States receive equal treatment as those with other health issues.

On May 21, 2015, Congressman Ted Deutch [D-FL] and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen [R-FL] introduced the Anna Westin Act of 2015 (H.R. 2515) to the House of Representatives. Both the House bill and new Senate bill seek to improve treatment coverage of eating disorders and to train health professionals and school personnel to identify eating disorders and intervene early; however, unlike the House bill, the Senate legislation does not require the Federal Trade Commission to research the effects of digitally altered photos of humans in advertisements or to report whether these images should be regulated.

“Millions of Americans are affected by the crippling symptoms of eating disorders but very few get the proper help they need, leading anorexia to have the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder,” said Klobuchar. “Whether that is due to late detection or insufficient insurance coverage, we should be doing more to give patients like Anna the tools they need to overcome these diseases.”

The bill improves the treatment of eating disorders through what is now recognized as “clarity of parity”. The legislation clarifies the intent of former Congressman Jim Ramstad [R-MN] and former Congressman Patrick Kennedy [D-RI] to include residential treatment services in their past bipartisan legislation, the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (the Parity Law), which required insurance providers to cover people with mental illness equally as those with other health issues. Recently, the former Congressmen released a [congressional letter of intent](#), stating their original Congressional intent to include eating disorders and residential treatment in the implementation of the Parity Law.

The Anna Westin Act of 2015 received its name in observance of a 21-year-old girl from Minnesota who lost her life to an eating disorder. Her insurance company refused to cover the costs of her treatment and the consequences were fatal. In order to prevent other families and friends from experiencing similar tragedies, Kitty Westin, mother of Anna Westin, established Minnesota's The Anna Westin Foundation (now The Emily Program Foundation) and other resources to help people experiencing eating disorders. To learn more about the Westins, you can refer to this video produced by EveryDayMatters, a nonprofit established by Netsmart for those who are cause-connected, passionate and vision-driven about opportunities for recovery in the mental health community: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InpNIaSHSkA>.

Kitty Westin notes, "It is hard to find adequate words to express how I feel about the Anna Westin Act. I feel great sorrow, elation and most of all HOPE. Sorrow because this comes too late for Anna and I miss her every day. Elation because The Anna Westin Act will prevent others from suffering like Anna and our family. HOPE because after 15 years of hard work and commitment I believe that together we will pass the Anna Westin Act and the result will help millions of people and save countless lives."

Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses, taking the lives of over 13% of people who suffer from them. They do not discriminate by age, race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Therefore, legislative measures must be taken to ensure that millions of Americans get the coverage they need.

The Eating Disorders Coalition is a Washington, D.C.-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of treatment providers, advocacy organizations and entities, parents of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. For more information regarding the Anna Westin Act of 2015, contact Katrina Velasquez at kvelasquez@eatingdisorderscoalition.org or 202-241-6617. Additional resources can also be found at www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org.