March 8, 2016

Senator Elizabeth Warren 
317 Hart Senate Office Building 
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Al Franken 
309 Hart Senate Office Building 
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Sherrod Brown 
713 Hart Senate Office Building 
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tammy Baldwin 
717 Hart Senate Office Building 
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Richard Blumenthal 
706 Hart Senate Office Building 
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Warren, Franken, Brown, Baldwin, and Blumenthal:

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, and Action would like to express our strong support for your recently introduced legislation, “The Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act of 2016,” (S. 2647) which would require health insurance issuers to disclose the analysis they perform in making mental health parity determinations for health insurance coverage, make federal regulators conduct random audits on at least twelve health plans per year, and create a central online portal for consumers to have a one-stop shop for all of the above parity-related information. This bill is a much-needed step towards enforcing the goals of The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA), and with this, we applaud your efforts and endorse this piece of legislation.

Few patients in the mental health field need the promises of parity fulfilled more than people with eating disorders. Eating disorders affect nearly 30 million Americans at some time in their life and have the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Only one in ten people affected will receive treatment for their eating disorder, often faced with access to treatment challenges resulting from parity noncompliance. Given the complexity of this severe mental illness, eating disorders patients must receive the full continuum of care recommended by their treatment team without interruption. Without timely and appropriate treatment, their illness may worsen to reach a stage that is very costly to treat and difficult to reverse. Your bill will help to enforce parity and improve access to care for people with eating disorders.

The Anna Westin Act of 2015 (S. 1865) includes legislative goals similar to The Behavioral Health Coverage Transparency Act, clarifying coverage of life-saving residential treatment under parity as well as trainings to help with early identification of this disorder by health professionals and school personnel. We hope to work with you in the future to push forward this great piece of legislation that you have offered, as well as folding in the Anna Westin Act within future legislative action. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all individuals and families who have been impacted by an eating disorder.

Sincerely,

Johanna Kandel
Board President
Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action

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