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**For Immediate Release**

## **Congress Makes History by Passing First-Ever Eating Disorders Legislation**

***Legislation led by Senator Capito passes Congress in larger mental health and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures package today, set to help the over 61,000 people in West Virginia currently experiencing an eating disorder***

**WASHINGTON, DC.** (December 7, 2016) — Today is a historic day for the 30 million Americans experiencing an eating disorder in their lifetimes and the more than 61,000 currently suffering in West Virginia alone. For the first time in history, Congress passed legislation specifically designed to help people with eating disorders, making its way to President Barack Obama's desk within the week with an expectation of his signing into law given his [recent support statement](#) for the legislation.

The House Amendment to the Senate Amendment of H.R. 34 includes the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures and Mental Health Reform Act of 2016 along with other health funding authorizations, which passed the House of Representatives with a 392-26 vote on November 30th and the Senate today by 94-5. The legislation included key provisions from Senator Shelley Moore Capito's bipartisan, bicameral Anna Westin Act of 2015 (S. 1865), including clarification of existing mental health parity law to improve health insurance coverage for eating disorders including life-saving residential treatment, early identification of eating disorders trainings for health professional such as doctors, and enhanced information and resources to help early identification of eating disorders by the public.

"Many years of hard work are represented with today's passage of the Anna Westin Act. This legislation will have a profound impact on the millions of Americans experiencing eating disorders and will help ensure they will not be denied access to the same mental health services as those facing other types of illnesses. I am proud of the role I was able to play in passing this bill, and thank the family of Anna Westin, who the bill is

named for, for all they have done in support of this groundbreaking legislation,” said Senator Capito.

Senator Capito introduced the Anna Westin Act of 2015 in July 2015 along with her colleagues Senator Amy Klobuchar [D-MN], Tammy Baldwin [D-WI] and Kelly Ayotte [R-NH]. The Anna Westin Act was named in honor of Chaska, Minnesota-native Anna Westin who struggled with anorexia for five years and lost her life due to the illness at the young age of 21. To learn more about Anna’s story, Netsmart’s EveryDayMatters created a short video that can be [viewed here](#).

Since the bill’s introduction, Capito led a call to action for her colleagues and the West Virginia delegation to support this life-saving bill, securing support from the majority of the West Virginia Congressional delegation including Congressman David McKinley [R-WV-1], Congressman Alexander Mooney [R-WV-2], and Congressman Evan Jenkins [R-WV-3]. Additionally Senator Capito visited the West Virginia University Disordered Eating Center, in Charleston, WV during National Eating Disorder Awareness Month in February 2016.

“This is legislation that patients and providers have been working toward for so long. We are so excited about the passage of the Anna Westin Act, which will provide vital insurance coverage for individuals with eating disorders to get the care they need to recover, along with important education and prevention opportunities,” says Jessica Luzier, PhD., of the West Virginia University Disordered Eating Center of Charleston. “In a state where access to mental health treatment has long been a challenge, this legislation will help tremendously. We are so grateful to Senator Capito for leading this charge, and for our additional legislators who have generously signed on as co-sponsors.”

*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 contact Katrina Velasquez at the Eating Disorders Coalition at [kvelasquez@eatingdisorderscoalition.org](mailto:kvelasquez@eatingdisorderscoalition.org). Additional resources can also be found at [www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org](http://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org).*

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