

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 10, 2013

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The Vice President of the United States
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Thank you for your leadership on the task force on gun violence. The President has charged the task force with quickly coming up with a set of concrete proposals in the wake of the tragedy last month in Newtown, Connecticut. We commend your willingness to examine a wide array of options, including improving access to mental health services. As you consider proposals to improve mental health care, we urge you to prioritize implementation of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008.

Under the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, millions of Americans with health insurance are entitled to access to a full range of mental health and substance use disorder services. However, while this historic law was passed four years ago, the administration has yet to issue a final rule, potentially leaving many Americans who need and have a right to these services without access to them.

We have led several letters with colleagues in the Senate to this administration regarding specific concerns with the implementation of this law. A strong and comprehensive final rule that protects the rights of Americans to access mental health and substance use disorder services is long overdue. As you craft the task force's proposals, we respectfully request that you include the full implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act among them.

Thank you for your consideration. If there is any other assistance we can provide, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Al Franken
United States Senator



Tom Harkin
United States Senator