

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 19, 2007

CONTACT: Melissa Wagoner
(202) 224-2633

**REMARKS OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY ON THE PASSAGE OF
THE MENTAL HEALTH PARITY BILL**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

I want to start by thanking my colleague, Senator Domenici, for his tireless effort. And I want to recognize the late Senator Paul Wellstone, who championed this fight for so many years. Without the leadership of these two remarkable Senators, we wouldn't be here on this historic day.

Americans believe that we are all created equal.

This bill brings us closer to that ideal by ending health insurance discrimination for mental illnesses for 113 million Americans.

One in five Americans will face mental illness this year. Today the United States Senate says to them loud and clear, you will no longer suffer in the shadows. With this bill, your health insurance will cover your illness.

With modern medicine, mental illnesses are just as treatable as physical illnesses. So it makes no sense for health insurance to cover one but not the other. When you're battling depression and other mental illnesses, the last thing you should have to worry about is whether your insurance will cover your treatment and care.

In treating the mental illnesses of our fellow citizens, they get their health back, but we get back our friends, our families and our coworkers. This is the right thing to help them live fuller lives. But it's also the right thing to do for our nation and our economy. Currently, mental illnesses cost over \$324 billion in treatment expenses, lost worker productivity, and crime.

The bill we passed represents an agreement, after ten long years of stalemate, not only between Democrats and Republicans, but also with the mental health community, businesses and the insurance industry.

We came together and decided that for too long, persons living with mental health disorders have suffered discrimination at all levels of society. They have faced stigma in their communities and prejudice on the job. They have been forced to pay more for the services they need than those with other kinds of illnesses.

Together, we have worked to end that discrimination. And the bill we passed today will begin to right these wrongs.

###

