

[NJAMHAA's DC Trip Confirms Congressmen's Support](#)

Details

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Also related to HIT, Senator Lautenberg's Health Aide stated that the office plans to cosponsor the Senate Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2011 (S 539), The definition of "health care provider" would include behavioral or mental health professional, substance abuse professional, psychiatric hospital, a community mental health center, a residential or outpatient mental health treatment facility, and a substance abuse treatment facility. An excerpt from the statement reads:

Governor Christie's plan to take health services away from New Jersey's most vulnerable families is neither humane nor a cost effective way to save money," stated Senator Lautenberg. "We need to make it easier for New Jerseyans to access health care services, not harder. Balancing the budget on the backs of low-income families is unacceptable and I will strongly oppose any proposal that targets the most hard pressed families in our state.

In addition, the Congressional delegates and their aides expressed a shared concern about the proposed freeze on new enrollments of low-income parents from NJ FamilyCare, as proposed under the New Jersey Comprehensive Medicaid Waiver. Furthermore, during the conversation with Rep. Holt and his aide, a concern was clearly expressed about the State Flexibility Act introduced by Congressmen Phil Gingrey (R-GA) and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), which would repeal the Medicaid Maintenance of Effort requirements first contained in the stimulus bill and later in the Accountable Care Act. NJAMHAA is likewise concerned with this bill as it would remove protections in place that protect low-income individuals, including those with behavioral health issues, from losing Medicaid coverage that would result from allowing states to dramatically cut eligibility limits. Also of note were the Congressmen's opposition toward plans to transition Medicaid to a block grant program, and support for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association's request for additional funds in the FY 2012 federal budget.

NJAMHAA was pleased to have the opportunity to present certificates of appreciation directly to Reps. Holt and Pascrell for their steadfast efforts in promoting true parity between behavioral health and medical benefits promised under the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. Their action was signing onto a letter to the Secretaries of the Departments of Labor, Treasury, and Health and Human Services, urging final regulatory guidance in critical areas of Scope of Service, Medical Criteria and Enforcement of Non-Quantitative Treatment Limits.

The most powerful and reassuring statement of support and dedication came from Rep. Holt. "All of these issues are really important and I want to work on them in any way I can," he said. Also meaningful was Rep. Pascrell's determination "to continue doing what we can to fight for Medicaid."

