



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

April 3, 2009

The Honorable David R. Obey, Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
B300 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and
Related Agencies
United States House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

We respectfully request the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee fund the Minority Fellowship Program within the Center for Mental Health Services at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at \$7.5 million for fiscal year (FY) 2010. This funding will provide critically needed mental health services for diverse populations.

The Minority Fellowship Program continues to help to reverse and eliminate disparities in mental health services and increase the quality of those services to minority populations by training minority mental health professionals to provide culturally competent, accessible mental health and substance use services for diverse populations. These services are critical at a time when the mental health needs of ethnic minorities in the United States have been, and continue to be, grossly underserved.

Recent reports that show the existence of health disparities in the mental health system reveal that minorities receive less mental health treatment at a lower quality than non-minorities. The cultures of ethnic minorities alter the types of mental health services needed, and communities with ethnic providers have proven to meet these needs by encouraging and increasing access to treatment. A key recommendation in these reports was to increase funding for training minority mental health professionals and to train mental health professionals to become culturally competent.

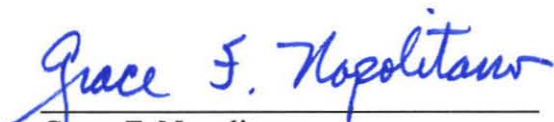
Studies have shown that ethnic minority mental health professionals practice in underserved areas at a higher rate than non-minorities, and a direct positive relationship exists between the numbers of ethnic minority mental health professionals and the utilization of needed services by ethnic minorities. In spite of this evidence, severe shortages of mental health professionals often arise in underserved areas due to the difficulty of recruitment and retention in the public sector.

Our nation's minority population continues to grow daily, and is projected to account for 40 percent of the total population in 2025. To ensure that minorities have access to culturally sensitive and effective mental health services, federal support for programs that train minority psychologists and other behavioral health professionals, such as the Minority Fellowship Program is vital.

We strongly support the services provided by the Minority Fellowship Program and urge you to support a FY 2010 LHHS bill that funds the Minority Fellowship Program at \$7.5 million to allow for the continuation of this important program.

Thank you in advance for your kind and thoughtful attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



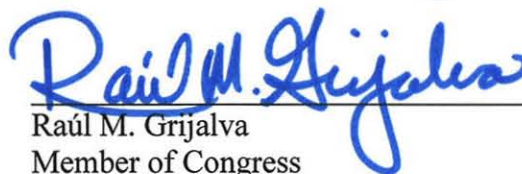
Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Timothy M. Murphy
Member of Congress



Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress



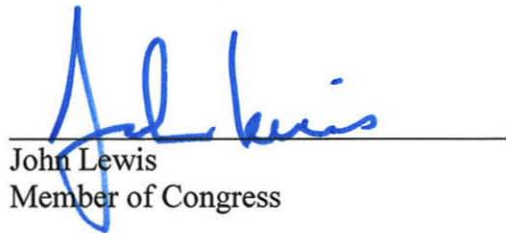
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



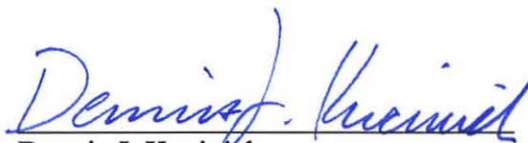
Edolphus Towns
Member of Congress



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