

# Mental Health Workforce Coalition

November 12, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey  
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and  
Human Services, and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and Education  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Cochran, Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Tiahrt:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing the *Mental Health Workforce Coalition*, we would like to thank you for your leadership in recognizing the need to increase the number of culturally competent mental health and substance abuse professionals in this country. As you and your colleagues determine final funding levels for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill, we request your support for the highest possible funding level for the Minority Fellowship Program (MFP), which is administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Additionally, we hope you will give thoughtful consideration to the unintended consequences of proposals to broaden the program to disciplines beyond nursing, psychology, psychiatry, social work, and marriage and family therapy. Without a substantial increase in funding, the inclusion of additional disciplines in the program would seriously disrupt the ability to support current MFP fellows.

The MFP was created in 1973 to help address the severe shortfall and reverse disparities in mental health services, and the quality of those services to minority populations. The program accomplishes this by training primarily minority mental health professionals to provide culturally competent, accessible mental health and substance abuse services to diverse populations. Since its inception, the MFP has helped to support the training of over 1,000 mental health fellows and continues to be an important program as the mental health needs of ethnic minorities in the U.S. have been, and continue to be, grossly underserved. Minority populations in underserved rural and urban communities continue to grow as do their mental health needs.

As the U.S. population becomes increasingly diverse and the need for additional mental health care professionals increases, it is now more critical than ever before to support increased funding for programs like the MFP. The MFP will continue to help ensure that our health care workforce is sustainable, culturally competent and adequately trained to address the unique needs of individuals, families, and caregivers with mental health and substance related problems.

We are grateful for your past efforts to provide increases to the program, and we urge you to do the same in FY 2011. We are concerned that providing flat funding for the MFP (currently at \$4.897 million as was provided in the Senate Subcommittee version of the FY 2011), would impede the ability of the Program's grantees to continue to meet the increasing mental health needs of our nation's minority populations. We urge your support for increased funding in the final FY 2011 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or require additional information about the MFP, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Wendy Naus at [wendy@lewis-burke.com](mailto:wendy@lewis-burke.com) or (202) 289-7475.

Sincerely,

Andrew Austin-Dailey  
American Psychological Association

Adisa Ajamu, PhD  
American Association for Marriage and  
Family Therapy

Annelle Primm, M.D.  
American Psychiatric Association

Geraldine Meeks, PhD, MPA  
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