Mental Health Workforce Coalition

February 9, 2010

The Honorable Pamela Hyde Administrator Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 1 Choke Cherry Road Rockville, MD 20875

Dear Administrator Hyde:

As members of the Mental Health Workforce Coalition, we write to congratulate you on your nomination and confirmation as Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the Department of Health and Human Services. We commend you on your lifelong dedication to public health care and human services, and look forward to working with you as you lead SAMHSA in addressing the substance abuse, prevention, addiction, and mental and behavioral health needs of all individuals living in the United States. We are particularly encouraged by your commitment to ensure that behavioral health is considered as part of the larger health care system and your plans to make SAMHSA a champion for prevention and wellness. This type of innovative and forward-looking leadership is just what our nation needs in order to combat, treat, and prevent mental health problems and substance abuse.

Given your extensive experience in the health care and human services fields for over 30 years, we are delighted to know that you deeply understand how critical it is to have a workforce that is specially trained to address the unique needs facing individuals and families, or caretakers of individuals, suffering from mental health problems and substance abuse. As health professionals, we must ensure that the workforce is robust, sustainable and diverse, enabling culturally competent services to all populations.

One way SAMHSA has sought to address the need to develop a sustainable health care workforce is through the long-standing and highly successful Minority Fellowship Program (MFP). The MFP was designed to help reverse the disparities that exist in mental health services and improve the quality of those services to minority populations through the training of minority mental health professionals. This continues to be an important program as the mental health needs of ethnic minorities in the United States have been, and continue to be, grossly underserved.

Evidence has shown that ethnic and racial 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 and racial minority mental health professionals and the utilization of needed services by ethnic and racial minorities. In your leadership at SAMHSA, we hope you will continue to support this critically important program, which has been instrumental in the recruitment and training of underrepresented groups in the fields of substance abuse and mental health.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to discuss ways that we can assist you in advancing the mission of SAMHSA and nurture a diverse and robust mental health and substance abuse workforce. Please contact Wendy Naus (wendy@lewis-burke.com) at your earliest convenience, when your schedule allows you to meet with us.

Once again, we congratulate you on your new position and wish you success in this critical new role. We look forward to working with you on this and other important issues impacting SAMHSA.

Sincerely,

Norman Anderson, PhD Chief Executive Officer

American Psychological Association

Linda Schwallie, MS

Linda Schwallie

President

American Association for Marriage and

Family Therapy

Ira C. Colby, DSW, LCSW, ACSW

American Psychiatric Association

James H. Scully, Jr. MD Medical Director and CEO

President

Council on Social Work Education

Rebecca M. Patton, MSN, RN, CNOR

President

American Nurses Association

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Member Contact Information

Andrew Austin-Dailey American Psychological Association adailey@apa.org

Annie Toro, JD American Psychological Association atoro@apa.org

Kenneth Hardy, PhD American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy kvh24@drexel.edu

Brian Rasmussen, PhD American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy brasmussen@aamft.org

Lizbet Boroughs
American Psychiatric Association
LBoroughs@psych.org

Annelle Primm, MD, MPH American Psychiatric Association aprimm@psych.org Jenny Jones, PhD Council on Social Work Education jjones@cswe.org

Wendy Naus Council on Social Work Education wendy@lewis-burke.com

Faye Gary, EdD, RN, FAAN American Nurses Association fgary@case.edu, fxg21@case.edu

Janet Jackson American Nurses Association Janet.jackson@ana.org

Kristen Kroeger American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychology kkroeger@aacap.org

Elizabeth Rorick, JD American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychology erorick@aacap.org