



**Wisconsin State AFL-CIO** ...the voice for working families.

David Newby, President • Sara J. Rogers, Exec. Vice President • Phillip L. Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer

To: Assembly Democrats  
From: Phil Neuenfeldt, Secretary-Treasurer  
Date: February 10, 2010

Re: **Support for Senate Bill 362 (Substitute Amendment 1)  
Wisconsin Mental Health & Substance Abuse Parity Act**

SB 362 represents an enlightened view of health care. It requires all group health insurance plans that provide mental health and substance abuse disorder benefits to do so at parity with other conditions covered by the plans.

Current mental health insurance coverage is based on long discarded medical views that believed there was no relationship between mind and body. Today we know they are inseparable—the brain influences all sorts of physiological processes, and biological factors can influence mental disorders. It is widely acknowledged that good mental health can even strengthen the body's immune system to provide greater resistance to disease. It just makes good sense to take a holistic approach to health and to what constitutes true well being. This makes good cost sense as well because of the increased long-term costs to the health care system which result from illnesses of any kind that go untreated.

People want to be productive members of the workforce and contribute to our society. The ability to hold a job and take home a paycheck contributes to an individual's sense of well being which aids in maintaining mental health. Health insurance coverage that promotes the early and effective treatment of mental illness and substance abuse will allow an individual to continue to be a productive member of the workforce. This benefits employers as well because it will reduce absenteeism and avoid the substantial costs that are associated with the replacement of skilled and experienced employees who did not receive the treatment they needed and deserved.

SB 362 represents a huge step forward in how our society should view health care and we urge your support.

*PN/JR/ls:opeiu#9,afl-cio*