



June 4, 2010

The Honorable Patrick Kennedy
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
The Honorable Al Franken, Tom Harkin, &
Amy Klobuchar, United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressman Kennedy and Senators Franken, Harkin and Klobuchar:

The undersigned organizations, representing disability and mental health advocates, consumers, treatment providers and professionals, are writing in support of the Federal Response to Eliminate Eating Disorders Act, the FREED Act (H.R. 1193, S. 3260).

The FREED Act is the first comprehensive eating disorders legislation in the history of Congress. This bill will, among other things, establish dedicated research collaboration, create a Center of Epidemiology to study the prevalence, economic impact and related morbidity and mortality rates of eating disorders, provide for evidence-based standards of care, establish education and prevention grant programs for the training of health professionals and schools at all levels, provide public service announcements, and enhance access to care for those who suffer from eating disorders.

Currently research shows that over nine million Americans suffer with eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, and eating disorders not specified. We also know that eating disorders do not discriminate – children, teens, and women and men of all ages, races, color, social and financial background, are affected.

The FREED Act is necessary for many reasons, but perhaps most importantly because *thousands of Americans die each year* as a result of an eating disorder. Eating disorders carry with them serious and often lethal health consequences including cardiac arrhythmia, loss of brain mass, osteoporosis, diabetes, infertility, asthma, bowel paralysis, depression, and heart failure. In fact, *anorexia nervosa has the highest death rate of all mental disorders*. The good news is that with early detection and adequate and appropriate treatment, eating disorders can be overcome. As with other mental illnesses, we know that eating disorders need not be hopeless, chronic, or deadly diseases – early diagnosis and treatment bring greater chances for survival and complete recovery. With the passing of the FREED Act more people have a chance of being diagnosed early and treated appropriately. The FREED Act offers hope to millions of Americans.

Thank you for your strong leadership on mental health issues and the FREED Act. We look forward to continuing to work with you to address these critical issues and passing the FREED Act.

Sincerely,