



Dear Policymaker:

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in four adults, approximately 57.7 million Americans, experience some form of a mental health disorder in a given year. One in 17 Americans live with a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia, major depression, or bipolar disorder, and about one in 10 children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder. These statistics raise the question of what state legislators can do to educate their constituents on how to recognize the symptoms of a mental illness and, once diagnosed, how to prevent serious consequences due to an untreated mental illness.

In 2009, Women In Government hosted its *Second Annual Mental Health Task Force*. State legislators from across the country gathered in National Harbor, Maryland, to discuss issues of mutual concern. During this meeting, our legislators produced Task Force Recommendations that included: supporting mental health programs aimed at workforce development and the need for sustainable, long-term funding; collecting data and outcome measurements to strengthen current mental health programs and justify ongoing financial support; reducing incarceration of people who live with mental illness; collaborating among mental healthcare providers and insurers to assess the current state of mental health policies; and promoting innovation and excellence in mental healthcare by funding best practice and promising practice programs to detect and treat mental health throughout the lifespan.

State legislators can play a vital role in supporting mental health initiatives that improve access to mental health services and meet the needs of an individual patient. Women In Government has produced a Legislative Toolkit that will assist you in your efforts to educate your constituents on mental health treatment options and help improve quality of life for patients who live with mental illnesses. Our Mental Health Legislative Toolkit includes: fact sheets; frequently asked questions; sample legislation; a fiscal impact analysis; and other resources.

This Toolkit is located on the Women In Government website at www.womeningovernment.org. If you have any questions regarding the Toolkit, please contact Heather Boyd, Senior Policy Associate, at hboyd@womeningovernment.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Brooks Beatty".

Mary Brooks Beatty
President