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The Honorable Vincent C. Gray

The Honorable David Grosso

The Honorable Robert C. White, Jr.

Members, Council of the District of Columbia

1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Washington, DC 20004

Re: Support for B22-0597

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Dear Councilmembers Gray, Grosso, and White,

On behalf of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), the nation's oldest and largest medical specialty organization representing more than 5,500 physicians and other clinicians who specialize in the treatment of addiction, and the Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine (MDDCSAM), we would like to take this opportunity to provide our support for B22-0597, which would require all health benefit plans offered by an insurance carrier to meet the requirements of the federal Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 and submit an annual report to the Department of Health Care Finance. We offer our strong support for this legislation.

MDDCSAM and ASAM are dedicated to increasing access to and improving quality of addiction treatment for patients in the District of Columbia and across the country. Ensuring mental health and addiction treatment services are covered at parity with medical and surgical benefits by payers and health plans is a critical part of our efforts to improve access to care. We believe that B22-0597 would effectively implement and enforce parity protections by mandating all providers in the District of Columbia to meet the requirements of the federal Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, which mandates providers to cover medically necessary behavioral health care services, including services for substance use disorders.

We commend you for providing accountability for payers and plans to report to the Department of Health Care Finance on their compliance with this federal law to ensure behavioral health and addiction services are being offered at parity to other medical services. Your commitment to implementing parity in the District of Columbia is illustrated in your sponsorship of this legislation and we implore the entire Council to pass this legislation as it will ensure widespread mental health parity implementation that is maintained through enhanced enforcement and oversight.

MDDCSAM and ASAM share the District of Columbia's goal of providing high-quality, evidence-based, and comprehensive behavioral health and addiction treatment services at parity with medical and surgical services. We thank you for introducing this legislation and offer our support for its passage. Please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Anika Alvanzo, at [aalvanz1@jhmi.edu](mailto:aalvanz1@jhmi.edu), if MDDCSAM and ASAM can be of service to you. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Kelly J. Clark, MD, MBA, DFAPA, DFASAM  
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine



Anika Alvanzo, MD, MS, FASAM, FACP  
President, Maryland-DC Society of Addiction Medicine

CC:

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