

DeLEO PRESSES FOR HOUSE VERSION OF MENTAL HEALTH PARITY BILL (7-25-08)
Representative Robert A. DeLeo

Contact: Jim Eisenberg (617) 722-2990

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BOSTON-State Representative Robert A. DeLeo (D-Winthrop) today called on the Senate to agree to stronger language included in a bill passed by the House on June 30th that would forbid insurance companies from discriminating against mental health and substance abuse ailments when providing coverage. The Senate's version provides similar protections but addresses a narrower range of mental health ailments as opposed to the House version which mandates equal coverage for all conditions.

"A disease is a disease. A sickness is a sickness. It doesn't matter whether it is a person's mental or physical health that is compromised, they should be treated the same. It's far past time when we should remove the conventional stigma of mental health and substance abuse treatment from our insurance policies and require equity of coverage for all illnesses, physical or mental," stated DeLeo.

Representative DeLeo, who serves as chairman of the House budget committee, has worked to ensure inclusion of increased funding for mental health and substance abuse treatment in the state budget and was a strong supporter of the bill when it was passed in the House.

DeLeo indicated his desire to work with the bill's chief sponsor, Chairwoman Ruth Balser of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Committee, to argue in favor of the stronger House language as the dueling bills are negotiated between the House and Senate.

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