

Kopetski, Mike

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PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

December 16, 1993

The Honorable Michael J. Kopetski
United States House of Representatives
218 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-3705

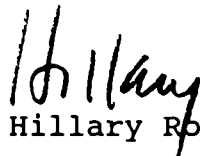
Dear Congressman Kopetski:

Thank you for sharing your concerns about my comments regarding the expansion of mental health benefits during my testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee. I sincerely regret the delay in my response, but I appreciate having this opportunity to clarify my statement.

The reference I made to phasing in the mental illness and substance abuse benefit as savings are realized was not meant to imply that expansion of the benefit is contingent on savings being achieved. The Health Security Act eliminates the day and visit limits as well as all special cost sharing provisions related to the mental illness and substance abuse benefit on January 1, 2001. This is a statutory change and is not contingent on anything else occurring. These limits may be eliminated earlier, if the addition of benefits does not cause any regional alliance to exceed its per capita premium target.

I am proud that the President's proposal ends discrimination in health care coverage against Americans with mental and substance abuse disorders. You have long been an advocate for improving the quality of care for those afflicted with mental illness, as well as for improving the access to treatment. I look forward to working with you to ensure that our common goals are achieved.

Sincerely yours,



Hillary Rodham Clinton

Happy Holidays!

MICHAEL J. KOPETSKI
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*cc: Melanne
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Congress of the United States
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September 30, 1993

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Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
Chair
The President's Task Force on Health Care Reform
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Clinton:

I greatly appreciate your appearing before the House Ways and Means Committee on September 28th to testify on the administration's health care reform proposal. I share your commitment to real reform of our health care system, and I look forward to working with you in the future on this.

As you may know, I am very concerned about improving our nation's mental health care system as we work on health care reform. In your response to a question I asked regarding specific mental health treatment limits contained in the benefit package, you indicated that while such limits would be imposed in the initial benefit package, these limits would be removed, giving way to a comprehensive benefit package, as we realize savings from health care reform. Attached please find an unofficial transcript of my question and your response. As it was my understanding that the progression to a comprehensive benefit package would not be conditional upon anticipated savings or any other aspect of the reform package, I would appreciate a written response from your office clarifying this matter at your earliest convenience.

Thank you again for your efforts on this most important issue, and for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,


Mike Kopetski
Member of Congress

MJK:sb

Rep. Kopetski: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and welcome. I understand and appreciate the fact that in the President's plan the mental health component of the benefit package will reach parity with the physical injury care by the year 2001. In spite of this we need to provide a wide range of services to the mentally ill, and in most cases the least restrictive treatment setting is the cheapest and the most effective.

Given the need for forms from inpatient settings to outpatient settings, why are there 60 days of inpatient hospitalization coverage available in the mental health package but only 30 days for outpatient psychotherapy?

Mrs. Clinton: The reason for that, Congressman, is that we are trying to start with emphasizing the care of the most severely mentally ill, those who do require the kind of inpatient intervention that often is linked to the most severe kinds of mental illness. We thought that would be our first responsibility to provide that kind of system, and we intend to build on the 30 days of outpatient treatment as we go forward. We also believe that with a prescription drug benefit the costs of medication will be more readily available for all different degrees of mental illness and that the 30 days of outpatient treatment combined with more affordable and accessible medication is an adequate benefit.

It is not where we think we should end up as a country, that is why we have additional benefits that we would recommend be phased in as we realize savings, but we think it is a very good and strong beginning for mental health coverage.

THE WHITE HOUSE

June 24, 1993

Honorable Michael J. Kopetski
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515-3705

Dear Representative Kopetski:

Thank you for writing to support inclusion of mental health benefits in the standard benefits package of the President's national health care reform plan.

The President and his health care advisors are considering the contents of a universal benefits package, including mental health services. Tipper Gore chaired the working group on mental health for the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform and has been a strong advocate for equitable treatment of mental health benefits. I have shared your concurrent resolution and the impressive list of cosponsors with Mrs. Gore and the President's advisors.

Again, thank you for all your efforts on behalf of health care reform. I look forward to our continued work together to ensure that every American family enjoys the security of quality, affordable health care.

Sincerely,


Hillary Rodham Clinton