January 9, 2008

The Honorable Grace F. Napolitano  
1610 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Attn: Elizabeth Ziegler

Dear Congresswoman Napolitano:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to thank you for sponsoring H.R. 3430, the “Mental Health in Schools Act of 2007.” The need for comprehensive school-based mental health services has never been greater. We must continue to work to remove the stigma of mental health treatment and provide our children with the support and services they need to thrive.

Building on S. 1332, the “Mental Health in Schools Act of 2007,” H.R. 3430 includes new input from educators, school-employed mental health personnel, school administrators, and mental health advocates to expand access to school-based mental health services by broadening the scope of the Safe Schools-Healthy Students program.

We are pleased that H.R. 3430, the “Mental Health in Schools Act of 2007” would increase opportunities for the approximately 53 million school-age children in our country by providing better access to mental health services in our nation’s 95,000 public schools by accomplishing the following:

- Revising, increasing funding for, and expanding the scope of the Safe Schools-Healthy Students program to provide access to more comprehensive school-based mental health services and supports
- Authorizing competitive grants to local school districts to assist them in implementing effective mental health programs for students (K-12), administered by state licensed or certified mental health professionals
- Requiring schools to apply a public health approach that incorporates positive behavioral interventions and supports to mental health programs in schools, emphasizing promotion and prevention in addition to treatment
- Accounting for the needs of youth who drop out of schools due to “zero tolerance policies” and those who have been incarcerated or are emancipated as foster youth
- Providing for comprehensive, culturally and linguistically appropriate, staff development for school and community service personnel working in the school, to identify and support students in need of immediate mental health care and those at-risk for behavioral mental health disorders, allowing teachers to concentrate on teaching
- Promoting positive mental health education and support for parents, siblings, and other family members of children with mental health disorders, as well as concerned members of the community
- Increasing collaboration between schools, health providers, families, media entities, and communities to provide and sustain more comprehensive mental health programs in schools
- Requiring schools to thoroughly document measures of outcome and demonstrate the actions they are taking to sustain the program independently of grant funds.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that H.R. 3430, the “Mental Health in Schools Act of 2007” is enacted into law.

Sincerely,
American Counseling Association
American Music Therapy Association
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
American School Counselor Association
APSE: The Network on Employment
Council for Exceptional Children
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children
Easter Seals
Learning Disabilities Association of America
Mental Health America
National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
National Association of Private Special Education Centers
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Down Syndrome Society
National Education Association
School Social Work Association of America
The Arc of the U.S. and United Cerebral Palsy
The Tourette Syndrome Association

Cc: Energy and Commerce Committee
    Senate HELP Committee