



AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

May 20, 2008

The Honorable Pete Stark  
U.S. House of Representatives  
239 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Stark:

On behalf of the 148,000 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA), I am writing in support of the *Family Leave Insurance Act of 2008* (H.R. 5873), legislation to strengthen the *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993*. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership and commitment to addressing issues impacting mental and behavioral health. Your continued efforts have greatly helped to increase education and awareness about these critical issues.

APA is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. Comprising researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants, and graduate students, APA works to advance psychology as a science, a profession, and as a means of promoting health, education and human welfare.

APA's long-standing commitment to promoting the well-being of children and families and creating optimal work conditions for families has been long documented in our association's policy statements and initiatives. This includes supporting policies that would ensure access to family-friendly jobs offering quality health insurance, including coverage for comprehensive family planning, mental health and substance use services, flexible work schedules, and sufficient family and medical leave.

The *Family Leave Insurance Act of 2008* represents a critical step in helping families balance the demands of their jobs with their family responsibilities. H.R. 5873 supports efforts to assist families utilize the benefits of the *Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993* by providing twelve weeks of paid benefits to all eligible employees who need to take leave time from work to care for an ill family member, a new child, or their own illness.

APA appreciates the inclusion of mental and behavioral health provisions in the legislation. In particular, we are pleased that the term "serious health condition" is construed to include mental health and substance use disorders, and that the term "health care provider" is inclusive of psychologists.

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As you may know, approximately 44 million individuals living in the United States who are 18 years of age or older suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. In addition, approximately one in five children has a diagnosable mental disorder and one in ten has a serious emotional or behavioral disorder that is severe enough to cause substantial impairment in functioning at home, at school, or in the community. Given these alarming statistics, the *Family Leave Insurance Act of 2008* lays a strong foundation for needed reforms that will benefit millions of families in the United States.

In closing, we would like to thank you once again for your efforts in developing the *Family Leave Insurance Act of 2008* and to offer our association's assistance in furthering passage of this vital legislation that would ensure that all eligible employees and their families will have access to quality health care and experience optimal health. Please contact Daniel E. Dawes, J.D., in our Public Interest Government Relations Office at (202) 682-5110 or [ddawes@apa.org](mailto:ddawes@apa.org), if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Keita". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of the first name being a large, stylized capital "G".

Gwendolyn Puryear Keita, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Public Interest Directorate