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October 17, 2003

The Honorable Olympia Snowe  
United States Senate  
154 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Snowe:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health care systems, networks and other providers of care, I am writing to express our support for your bill, the Medicaid Psychiatric Hospital Fairness Act of 2003.

The Emergency Medical and Labor Treatment Act (EMTALA) requires hospitals to stabilize patients in an emergency medical condition including psychiatric hospitals. At the same time the Medicaid program, through the Institution for Mental Diseases (IMD) exclusion, prevents non-public psychiatric hospitals from receiving Medicaid reimbursement for Medicaid patients between the ages of 21-64 that require stabilization. These hospitals are burdened with an unfunded mandate in fulfilling their EMTALA obligations for this patient population.

Your legislation will allow non-public psychiatric hospitals to receive appropriate reimbursement for Medicaid beneficiaries between the ages of 21-64 who require emergency treatment and stabilization as required by EMTALA. This will relieve overcrowding in emergency departments and provide the appropriate care these patients deserve in a more timely manner.

Thank you for addressing this important issue. We support the Medicaid Psychiatric Fairness Act of 2003 and look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure swift passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack  
Executive Vice President