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July 22, 2004

The Honorable Christopher Dodd  
United States Senate  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Dodd:

On behalf of the American Hospital Association's nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems, networks, and other providers of care, I am writing to support the "Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act," (S. 2634). We commend you for your longstanding leadership in promoting bipartisan mental illness education and treatment programs.

We believe that your legislation is a good first step toward helping reduce youth suicide through, among other things, statewide screening and early intervention. As you know:

- Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 15-to-24-year-olds.
- 19% of all surveyed high school students had seriously contemplated suicide.
- Nearly 24% of all surveyed female high school students had seriously contemplated suicide.
- Nearly 9% of all surveyed high school students had attempted suicide.

Your bill would allow for increased prevention, screening, early intervention, assessment, treatment, management, grants and education related to mental illness treatment services for college students and others. We believe that these services are essential. We also believe that the time has come to end health policies that create stigma and discriminate against people with mental illness. We also look forward to working with you to pass the Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act in the near future.

Sincerely,

Rick Pollack  
Executive Vice President

Gordon and Osborne hr4799

