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**STATEMENT ON THE RELEASE OF THE
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S NEW FREEDOM COMMISSION ON MENTAL HEALTH**

**Rick Pollack, Executive Vice President, American Hospital Association
Mark Covall, Executive Director, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems**

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We applaud President George W. Bush and the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health for their efforts to improve the care and treatment of the millions of American children, adolescents, and adults who experience mental disorders every year. As associations representing behavioral health care organizations and professionals, we welcome the attention that release of the Commission's report will draw to mental health as a critical public health and public policy issue. Of particular value is the report's focus on reducing fragmentation and creating a coordinated system of care – goals shared by America's hospitals and caregivers.

We are pleased that the report acknowledges, among other issues, the challenges facing Americans who require acute behavioral health care. In recent years, access to acute care has become a concern as available beds in both the private and public sectors have declined, as emergency rooms in some areas have experienced backlogs, and as aftercare services have become scarce. We are committed to developing and promoting solutions.

We hope – and urge – that the report of the President's Commission on Mental Health will provide momentum for policymakers to eliminate discrimination for people with mental illnesses and to provide the resources necessary to improve patient care.

With more than 10 million Americans facing serious mental illnesses, we are all touched in some way by the health, economic, and very human impact of these mental disorders. As a nation, we must continually work toward overall health by devoting adequate resources to both mind and body.

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