REDC Advocacy Toolkit Fact Sheet

Eating disorders are biologically based mental illnesses that affect at least 30 million Americans of all ages, ethnicity groups, and socio-economic statuses.1,2

If left untreated, eating disorders can result in dangerous and costly medical complications, including:
- Osteoporosis
- Infertility
- Dehydration
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Cardiac arrest
- Kidney failure

Only about a third of people with an eating disorder ever receive treatment.3 Among adolescents with eating disorders, fewer than 1 in 5 receive treatment.4

Inadequate insurance coverage generally can be attributed to this lack of access and treatment.
- Insurance coverage either specifically excludes eating disorders or limits their scope of coverage.
- When treatment is cut short by denial of coverage, individuals are discharged before they acquire the skills necessary to sustain treatment gains, resulting in costing and the potentially life-threatening revolving door of inpatient admissions and insufficient outpatient care.
- Proper care for eating disorders results in recovery. Only about 15% of individuals remain chronically ill and without appropriate care, people can and do die.5

Access to full-range eating disorder treatment is cost-effective, in that:
- Treatment dramatically reduces mortality.
- The population affected is relatively young.6
- Mandatory insurance coverage would have negligible effects on monthly premium amounts, only $0.37 in 2012, according to a Massachusetts study.7

Level of care (listed from least to most restrictive):
- Outpatient
- Intensive outpatient (IOP)
- Partial Hospital Program (PHP) or Intensive Day Program (IDP)
- Residential
- Inpatient

Action by Congress is Necessary

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7. Compass Health Analytics, Inc. Actuarial Assessment of Massachusetts house Bill No. 3024 Defining Eating Disorders as Biologically-Based Illnesses prepared for Division of Health Care Finance and Policy, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.