Contact: Jillian Lampert
Phone: 651-645-5323 ext. 1133
Email: jillian.lampert@emilyprogram.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Advocates celebrate passage of first-ever eating disorder legislation

Legislation named after Minnesota native Anna Westin and led by Sen. Amy Klobuchar is expected to help over 180,000 people in Minnesota currently struggling with an eating disorder

Washington, D.C., December 7, 2016 – Today is a historic day for the 30 million Americans who will experience an eating disorder in their lifetimes and the more than 180,000 currently suffering in Minnesota alone. For the first time in history, Congress passed legislation specifically designed to help people with eating disorders.

The 21st Century Cures Act passed today with an overwhelming majority of 94-5 in the Senate. Embedded in the bill was language from The Anna Westin Act, which called for expanded health professional training to include recognition and treatment of eating disorders, ending exclusion of eating disorders treatment from insurance policies, and providing resources to help the public identify eating disorders early.

The Anna Westin Act was named in honor of Chaska, Minnesota native Anna Westin who struggled with anorexia for five years and lost her life to the illness at age 21. Anna's parents, Mark and Kitty Westin, were catapulted into a world of unimaginable grief and loss; yet out of it all, they rose to fight for changes to the law that would help prevent other parents from having to travel their same path.

"No longer will families have to suffer the death of a child because they couldn't access quality care," said Kitty Westin, board member of The Emily Program Foundation. "Our family is so thrilled that after 16 years, we can celebrate changes to the law that will help dramatically decrease the likelihood that other families will experience the pain and suffering our family experienced. Nothing can bring Anna back, but we will celebrate this victory for her and so many others like her."

For the past 16 years the Westins, along with advocates with The Emily Program, a St. Paul-based nationally recognized eating disorder treatment provider and The Emily Program Foundation, a Minnesota non-profit organization focused on eating disorder related education and advocacy, have worked tirelessly on Capitol Hill with the Eating Disorders Coalition to pass legislation to improve access to quality eating disorder care and prevent further loss of life.

“The training of health professionals in early recognition of eating disorders will save lives,” said Jillian Lampert, PhD, RD, MPH, FAED, Chief Strategy Officer of The Emily Program. “All too often, we hear from clients and families that health professionals didn’t intervene early enough, did not recognize the signs and symptoms of eating disorders, and didn’t know what to do when they did. Health professionals simply need more training. They don’t get adequate training on eating disorders in school or professional trainings, but this bill will change that.”

Sen. Klobuchar introduced the Anna Westin Act of 2015 in July 2015 along with her colleagues Sens. Kelly Ayotte [R-NH], Tammy Baldwin [D-WI] and Shelley Moore Capito [R-WV]. Since the bill’s introduction, Klobuchar led a call to action for her colleagues and the Minnesota delegation to support this life-saving bill, securing support from the vast majority of the Minnesota Congressional Delegation including Sen. Al Franken [D-MN], Rep. Erik Paulsen [R-MN-3], Rep. Keith Ellison [D-MN-5], Rep. Collin Peterson [D-MN-7], Rep. Tom Emmer [R-MN-6], Rep. Richard Nolan [D-MN-8], Rep. Timothy Walz [D-MN-1] and Rep. Betty McCollum [D-MN-4].

“Millions of Americans suffer from eating disorders but very few get the help they need. Anna Westin, who this bill is named for, died after struggling with an eating disorder for several years. Her mom, Kitty, lives in my state and has been a leading voice in the effort to do more to support patients,” said Klobuchar. “Passing our bipartisan legislation into law brings us one step closer to preventing future tragedies and giving patients the tools they need to get help.”

The bill will reach President Obama’s desk in the next week and is expected to be signed into law, given the President’s recent support statement for the legislation.

###

About The Emily Program

The Emily Program was founded in 1993 by Dirk Miller, PhD, LP, after his sister Emily recovered from an eating disorder. Recognizing that one size does not fit all, The Emily Program develops a personalized care plan for its clients that incorporates individual and group therapy, nutrition, yoga and more. If you or someone you know is struggling with an eating disorder, call 1-888-EMILY77 or visit emilyprogram.com.

About The Emily Program Foundation

The Emily Program Foundation is on a mission to save lives, change minds, and work to eliminate eating disorders. The Emily Program Foundation envisions a world without stigma and misconceptions about eating disorders and disordered eating. It hopes to be a catalyst in shaping new, informed conversations through advocacy, social outreach, and collaboration with community partners. For more information go to emilyprogramfoundation.org.

About The Eating Disorders Coalition

The Eating Disorders Coalition is a Washington, D.C.-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of treatment providers, advocacy organizations and entities, parents of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. For more information contact Katrina Velasquez at the Eating Disorders Coalition at kvelasquez@eatingdisorderscoaltion.org. Additional resources can also be found at www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org.