

April 6, 2022

The Honorable Doris Matsui
2311 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
2421 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sharice Davids
1541 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Estes
2411 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: INTRODUCTION OF THE BHIT NOW ACT

Dear Representatives Matsui, Mullin, Davids, and Estes,

On behalf of the Behavioral Health Information Technology (BHIT) Coalition, the undersigned member organizations applaud your continued leadership in addressing barriers to behavioral health care. We support and endorse the Behavioral Health Information Technologies Now (BHIT NOW) Act, which will build further infrastructure for health care integration technologies.

About the BHIT Coalition

Established in 2010, the BHIT Coalition is comprised of organizations dedicated to advancing public policy initiatives that **improve integrated, coordinated, and accessible care for individuals seeking mental health and substance use treatment**. These improvements start with federal funding for behavioral health providers to establish a foundation of modern documentation and exchange of patient records through Electronic Health Records (EHRs).

Why You Have Our Support

Individuals with serious mental illness (SMI) are prone to have an array of physical comorbidities. As of 2018, 44.1% of adults diagnosed with a mental disorder reported having a co-occurring physical health condition. Addressing physical and behavioral health through a whole-person approach of integration can improve overall patient outcomes, as well as reduce costs for payers and providers. Providers who can share information avoid conflicting treatments and poor

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MEMBERS: American Psychological Association • Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness • Centerstone • Jewish Federations of North America • Mental Health America • National Alliance on Mental Illness • National Association of Counties • National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors • National Association for Behavioral Healthcare • National Association of State Alcohol/Drug Abuse Directors • National Association of Social Workers • National Council for Mental Wellbeing • Netsmart

medication interactions, and share awareness of accurate, up-to-date, and complete information about patients.

BPC & MACPAC Recommendations

In its March 2021 report to Congress, titled: [Tackling America's Mental Health and Addiction Crisis Through Primary Care Integration](#), the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) suggested Congress establish “a targeted funding structure to assist behavioral health providers with startup costs, maintenance, and training for health IT in behavioral health settings.” BPC found integrating care – with such methods as those in the BHIT NOW Act – would improve health disparities, raise the outcome of treatments, and support cost effective care. Specifically, BPC recommended that Congress finance the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) demonstration program authorized in Sec. 6001 of the SUPPORT Act (P.L.115-271) that offers behavioral health IT incentives to psychologists and clinical social workers as well as Community Mental Health Centers, psychiatric hospitals, and residential treatment centers.

In June 2021, the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) released a report chapter, titled: [Integrating Clinical Care through Greater Use of EHR for Behavioral Health](#). MACPAC additionally noted that behavioral health integration of EHR would increase clinical integration and achieve cost savings, enable participation in value-based payment, and improve the quality of health reporting.

Your bill follows the BPC and MACPAC policy recommendations by financing the aforementioned demonstration, provided that the adopted information technology systems comply with 2015 certification standards issued by the Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) and a provider attestation of compliance with the Trump Administration's Interoperability and Data Blocking regulations.

The BHIT Coalition thanks you again and stands in support as you and the House Committee of Energy and Commerce take up this legislation to include incentives for adoption of behavioral health information technology and advocate for investments in integrated care.

Sincerely,

American Psychological Association
Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness
Centerstone

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