

August 16, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
The Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the Behavioral Health Information Technology (BHIT) Coalition, the undersigned organizations write to **urge the Senate to act quickly on the passage of S. 1732, the Improving Access to Behavioral Health Information Technology Act, which authorizes a behavioral health information technology pilot program administered by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI). We very much appreciate that both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have acted on this important legislation and look forward to its final passage.**

The Coalition notes that many provisions in the larger House and Senate opioid bills – H.R. 6, S. 2680, S. 3120 – seek to expand access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for individuals with Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). However, we believe that there is a strong need for Electronic Health Records (EHRs) in conjunction with the administration of MAT. In our view, health IT promotes both patient safety and the application of e-prescribing to oral addiction treatment medications, resulting in significantly improved care coordination. **The BHIT Coalition recognizes that mental health and addiction treatment providers would struggle to participate in MAT expansion without access to EHRs. We know that you agree that our nation cannot hope to address the opioid crisis successfully without providing health information technology within behavioral health settings, supporting your vision to expand MAT.**

While we recognize that there are minor technical differences between the House and Senate versions of these bills, we hope that they will be worked out in an expeditious fashion. The BHIT Coalition is ready to support you in the fight to expand access to behavioral health information technology and providing MAT for those with OUD, as we complete the final steps in this process to send this legislation to the President's desk.

Sincerely,

American Psychological Association

Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness

Centerstone

The Jewish Federations of North America

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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 Directors & Developmental Disability Directors • National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems • National Association of State Alcohol/Drug Abuse Directors • National Association of Social Workers • National Council for Behavioral Health • Netsmart

Mental Health America

National Association of Counties

The National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems

The National Association for Rural Mental Health

National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors

National Association of Social Workers

National Council for Behavioral Health

Netsmart