

POLITICO

EHEALTH WHITEBOARD

Behavioral health IT has idea for meaningful use expansion

By **DAVID PITTMAN**

The behavioral health IT community is urging House lawmakers to use budget gimmicks to realize the long-sought goal of expanding the meaningful use program to mental health providers.

In a letter today to Energy and Commerce leaders Fred Upton and Frank Pallone, groups including the American Psychological Association, Mental Health America, the National Alliance on Mental Illness and Netsmart urged that the Integrating Behavioral Health Through Technology Act (S. 2691) be included in mental health legislation set to be marked up later this month.

The bill would create a five-year, five-state pilot program that expands the EHR incentive program to psychologists, social workers, psychiatric hospitals, community health centers and other substance abuse treatment centers.

The letter urges members to use “such sums” authorization language to ease funding concerns. The trick means lawmakers wouldn’t state an amount to be funded, leaving appropriators to allocate any amount they wish within existing budget caps.

That means no score from the Congressional Budget Office and no need to find a budget offset, making it more likely to be included in a final bill.

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