

January 18, 2012

The Honorable Tim Murphy
322 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515-3818

RE: The Behavioral Health Information Technology Act

Dear Representative Murphy:

On behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, I am writing to thank for your leadership in the field of Health Information Technology [HIT]. In particular, your work in founding the 21st Century Health Caucus was critical to ultimate congressional passage of the HITECH Act, which will revolutionize the delivery of health care in the United States.

It is for this reason we are writing to you in the hopes you can introduce the proposed Behavioral Health Information Technology Act. We feel this legislation is an important step forward in strengthening our overall health continuum, specifically related to health care delivery among the most vulnerable we serve in the greater Pittsburgh area.

Our interest in healthcare delivery stems from Jewish teachings that inform us the life and health of all community members are of infinite value. Through our Aging and Human Needs Commission, the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh provides core funding to agencies that ensure community demand for these services is met. A strong example is the *AgeWell Pittsburgh* initiative which provides services and regular health screenings to older adults in the metro area. In addition, our Jewish partner agencies serve families with special healthcare needs providing everything from nutrition assistance and transportation to rehabilitation services.

People with serious mental illnesses – including conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder – are a major patient population for our community and residential providers. At present, the HITECH Act discriminates against these patients/consumers by excluding psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers and other behavioral providers from participating Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement under the HITECH Act.

In the 111th Congress, we were grateful for your introduction of the Health Information Technology Extension for Behavioral Health Service Act (H.R. 5040). The latest Behavioral HIT Act proposal you are deliberating is very similar to your bill from the last Congress. **However, one important difference is the most recent legislation is fully paid for, an important point given your need to be fiscally prudent.**

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We hope you will be able to take a leadership role in introducing this legislation as it will ensure our Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh can continue its work with persons who have severe mental disorders. This bill will offer behavioral health consumers the opportunity to receive the benefits of enhanced care coordination, improved efficiency and better clinical outcomes – all made possible by the HIT revolution you have done so much to lead.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you regarding this proposed legislation. Should you have any questions about the proposed legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone at (412) 992-5260 or via email at jfinkelstein@jfedpgh.org

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Finkelstein
President/CEO

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