

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Electronic Medical Records
Improve Mental Health Outcomes and Save Money
Cosponsor the Behavioral Health IT Act

Dear Colleague,

We invite you to cosponsor the Behavioral Health Information Technology Act, legislation to encourage mental health providers to establish electronic health record systems (EHRs). Federal law already provides a mechanism for hospitals and clinicians to invest in EHRs. Expanding the application of electronic medical records to the mental health community will produce better outcomes for persons with mental illness and reduce overall healthcare spending by integrating care.

The services provided by mental health professionals are vital to the overall health of the patients they serve, yet fewer than half of behavioral health providers possess fully implemented EHR systems. Integrating mental healthcare providers into EHR networks will result in better coordinated care for patients and a savings of \$1.7 billion over ten years by reducing adverse drug-to-drug interactions and averting emergency room visits and hospital admissions. A January 2013 study by Johns Hopkins University found that hospitals readmission rates for the mentally ill fell by 39% when other mental health professionals like psychologists were given electronic access to inpatient psychiatric records.

The Behavioral Health Information Technology Act would:

- Clarify the definition "health care provider" throughout the HITECH Act to include behavioral and mental health professionals, substance abuse professionals, psychiatric hospitals, behavioral and mental health clinics, and substance use treatment facilities.
- Make behavioral health providers eligible for HITECH Act technical assistance which will enhance HIT infrastructure, facilitate medical staff training, and improve the exchange of health information between mental health providers and other health care providers.
- Extend Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement for meaningful use of EHRs to psychologists and mental health professionals who provide clinical care at psychiatric hospitals, mental health treatment facilities, and substance abuse treatment facilities.

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Scott Dziengelski in Rep. Murphy's office (5-2301) or Lauren Alfred in Rep. Barber's office (5-5261).

Sincerely,



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress



Ron Barber
Member of Congress