

Introduction of the BHIT NOW Act *PRESS RELEASE*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES NOW ACT IMPROVES CARE COORDINATION

Washington, DC – APRIL 6, 2022 – Today, Representative Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Representative Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) introduced landmark legislation to establish parity between mental and physical health care coordination. The Behavioral Health Information Technologies Now (BHIT NOW) Act supports financial incentives for behavioral health care providers to join their primary care counterparts in efforts to coordinate physical and mental health care.

Primary care health systems and providers have long benefited from the implementation of Electronic Health Record (EHR) systems. These digital records provide a quick and effective way to coordinate care for those with co-occurring medical and mental health issues. Unfortunately, most behavioral health providers have been excluded from available federal funding to support adoption of EHR systems.

The BHIT NOW Act will:

- Finance behavioral health IT adoption at \$250 million.
- Condition funding allocations to providers based on:
 - Acquisition of health IT systems that comply with 2015 certification standards, and
 - Attestation of provider compliance with Trump Administration Interoperability and Data Blocking regulations.
- Direct the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to develop voluntary behavioral health IT standards.

“Electronic health records paired with care coordination and interoperability capabilities are a critical prerequisite for full participation in the fast-evolving integrated healthcare ecosystem,” said Netsmart Executive Vice President Kevin Scalia. *“This legislation funds a key program to equip behavioral health providers with the technology needed to deliver whole-person, coordinated care to individuals with mental illness, substance use disorders and co-occurring physical health conditions, to ultimately save lives.”*

“The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) supports the introduction of legislation by Representatives Matsui and Mullin that will help propel broader certified EHR adoption among mental health and substance use treatment providers. Increased use of EHRs by behavioral health providers will

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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

help improve our ability to integrate care and enhance quality of care for patients,” said ABHW President and CEO Pamela Greenberg.

“The National Association for Behavioral Healthcare (NABH) applauds Reps. Matsui and Mullin for recognizing that for far too long, behavioral healthcare providers have not received health information technology funding that other providers have benefited from,” said NABH President and CEO Shawn Coughlin. *“Their legislation would enable behavioral healthcare providers to coordinate care across behavioral healthcare service systems, primary care facilities, and specialty medicine providers more efficiently.”*

“The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) proudly endorses the BHIT NOW Act introduced by Reps. Matsui and Mullin, said NASW Deputy Director of Programs Anna Mangum, MSW, MPH. “This critically needed legislation will support clinical social workers in harnessing the power of electronic health records to better coordinate care with other providers. This is a key step in deploying health IT in improving the behavioral health delivery and outcomes.”

These policy changes provide individuals and families the services and supports that best meet their health care needs. Establishing a foundation for integrated behavioral and physical health care is required to best treat patients with co-occurring health needs.

About the BHIT Coalition:

The Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition is the unifying voice of America’s mental health and IT providers comprised of organizations and companies such as American Psychological Association, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, Centerstone, The Jewish Federations of North America, Mental Health America, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association for Behavioral Healthcare, National Association of Counties, National Association of County Behavioral Health & Developmental Disability Directors (NACBHDD), National Association of Social Workers, National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, National Council for Mental Wellbeing, Netsmart, amongst others.

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