

# Mental Health Liaison Group

August 2013

The Honorable Timothy Murphy  
322 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ron Barber  
1029 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen Murphy and Barber:

On behalf of the millions of Americans living with mental and substance use disorders, their families and communities, the undersigned organizations write today in strong support for H.R. 2957, the *Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2013*, a bill to extend the meaningful use incentives established through the *HITECH Act (Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health, P.L.111-5)* to mental health and substance abuse providers and facilities. MHLG thanks you for your leadership in highlighting the importance of behavioral health.

The *HITECH Act* provided \$20 billion in incentives and grants to health care providers and hospitals to establish interoperable electronic health record (EHR) systems throughout the nation. These benefits are extended to most physicians, chiropractors, dentists, optometrists, podiatrists and most hospitals. However, an important sector of the health care community is excluded—clinical psychologists, psychiatric hospitals, substance use treatment facilities and mental health treatment facilities.

The ultimate goal of widespread adoption of health information technology – to save American lives through improved coordination of care – is particularly relevant to persons with mental and addictive disorders. Recent studies have revealed that persons with serious mental illness die sooner than other Americans, and have an average age of death at 52. Health information technology (HIT) is the essential cornerstone of efforts to address this emerging public health crisis. HIT will enable behavioral health and substance abuse providers to effectively coordinate care across mental health and substance abuse service systems, primary care entities, and specialty medicine.

The *Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2013* would make important changes to Medicare and Medicaid to ensure that the incentives provided through ARRA for the meaningful use of electronic medical records would allow for these mental health and substance use providers, hospitals and facilities to be on par with the rest of the nation in regards to the electronic exchange of health information and as a result improve the health and safety of all patients.

MHLG looks forward to working with you to pass this bill during the 113th Congress. Thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Children and Families  
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry  
American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

National organizations representing consumers, family members, advocates, professionals and providers  
c/o Trevor Summerfield, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at [tsummerfield@afsp.org](mailto:tsummerfield@afsp.org),  
Julie Clements, American Psychiatric Association at [jclements@psych.org](mailto:jclements@psych.org) and Nancy Trenti, National Association of  
Psychiatric Health Systems at [ntrenti@naphs.org](mailto:ntrenti@naphs.org)  
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention/SPAN USA

American Group Psychotherapy Association  
 American Mental Health Counselors Association  
 American Psychiatric Association  
 American Psychological Association  
 Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
 Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare  
 Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness  
 Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law  
 Center for Clinical Social Work/ABE  
 Center for Integrated Behavioral Health Policy \*  
 Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder  
 The Jewish Federations of North America  
 Mental Health America  
 National Alliance on Mental Illness  
 National Association for Children's Behavioral Health  
 National Association for Behavioral Health  
 National Association of Counties  
 National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors  
 National Association of Mental Health Planning & Advisory Councils  
 National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems  
 National Association of Social Workers  
 National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors  
 National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery  
 National Council on Community Behavioral Healthcare  
 National Disability Rights Network  
 National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
 National Foundation for Mental Health  
 Therapeutic Communities of America  
 Tourette Syndrome Association  
 United States Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

*\* not a MHLG member*

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 c/o Trevor Summerfield, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention at [tsummerfield@afsp.org](mailto:tsummerfield@afsp.org),  
 Julie Clements, American Psychiatric Association at [jclements@psych.org](mailto:jclements@psych.org) and Nancy Trenti, National Association of  
 Psychiatric Health Systems at [ntrenti@naphs.org](mailto:ntrenti@naphs.org)