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From: POLITICO Pro eHealth Whiteboard <politicoemail@politicopro.com>
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Congress should mandate that all electronic health records be interoperable by 2017 and make mental health providers eligible for meaningful use incentives, the Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition [told](#) lawmakers today.

Its comments came in response to a request from Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden and Sen. Chuck Grassley, who last month asked for ideas on how to make greater use of health care data while protecting patient privacy.

The group of mental health provider associations said Congress should include language stipulating interoperability of EHRs in a bill that would repeal Medicare's sustainable growth rate payment formula.

It also wants psychiatric hospitals, community mental health centers, practicing psychologists and outpatient and inpatient addiction providers to be covered by the HITECH Act.

"The status quo guarantees fragmentation of behavioral health data — by consigning mental health and addiction providers to antiquated health record management systems — and actively obstructs the integration of behavioral health into the larger health care system," the Coalition's letter notes.

— *David Pittman*

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