

Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition Lauds Congressional Support for Health IT Incentives for Behavioral Health, Passage of Final Opioid Package

WASHINGTON, DC (September 26, 2018): [The Behavioral Health Information Technology \(BHIT\) Coalition](#) applauds Congressional approval of the Improving Access to Behavioral Health Information Technology Act. The legislation authorizes a behavioral health information technology pilot program administered by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI), including incentives for the adoption of electronic health record (EHR) technology, and the use of that technology to improve quality and coordination of care.

The Coalition especially thanks Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins (R-KS) and Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) for their steadfast leadership on this legislation.

The BHIT Coalition is comprised of a broad spectrum of organizations dedicated to advancing public policy initiatives that tap the full potential of technology in the delivery of coordinated, integrated services and treatment for people with a history of mental health and substance use.

Behavioral health providers, such as community mental health clinics, county behavioral health authorities, psychiatric hospitals, clinical psychologists and clinical social workers, continue to lag behind in the adoption rates of EHRs. Without health IT infrastructure, our nation could not hope to successfully address the opioid epidemic. Congress's leadership ensuring the inclusion of health IT incentives in this legislation effectively promotes patient safety and significantly improves care coordination.

National Council for Behavioral Health President & CEO Linda Rosenberg released the following statement:

"We agree with Congress, in the midst of the opioid epidemic, CMMI must provide mental health and addiction providers with the tools needed to save lives. While this legislation includes provisions for expanding access to Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT), widespread MAT e-prescribing isn't feasible without CMMI providing EHR incentives to behavioral health providers, who have lower EHR adoption rates than primary care providers and hospitals. The National Council is grateful Congress has overwhelmingly supported behavioral health IT incentives as a crucial part to ensuring the success of this legislation." **said National Council President & CEO Linda Rosenberg.**

Netsmart Executive Vice President Kevin Scalia released the following statement:

"Community-based behavioral health providers, addiction treatment facilities, psychiatric hospitals and the other providers included in this bill must be able to adopt health information technology at roughly the same rate as hospitals and doctors nationwide. If not, care coordination across the spectrum of human services, primary care and long-term post-acute care will rapidly become impossible – compromising quality of care for some of the most vulnerable people and further increasing cost of care. We have worked more than 10 years to get to this point. This legislation is a positive step in the path for providers who face significant resource challenges at a time of

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unprecedented need for their services, including the broad-based impact of the nationwide opioid crisis,” said Netsmart Executive Vice President Kevin Scalia.

About BHIT Coalition: The Behavioral Health Information Technology (BHIT) Coalition is comprised of organizations dedicated to advancing public policy for technology that can improve the lives of people with mental health and addiction disorders. Learn more at <http://www.bhitcoalition.org/>.