



Maryland Counseling Association

Federal Hill Day 2022: Agenda

Introductions

- To MCA
- To us as individuals including relevant clinical/research experience

Policy: Existing legislation

Background Check Expansion Act (S.529/H.R.8)

- **STATUS:** Passed U.S. House of Representative 3/11/2021
- **DETAILS:** Prohibits transfer of firearms between private parties unless a licensed gun dealer/manufacturer/importer takes possession and conducts a background check first; adds new background check requirement for firearm transfers between unlicensed private parties; does not apply in certain situations (gift between spouses in good faith)
- **OUR STANCE:** Need this policy to continue moving forward in the U.S. Senate
 - Will better protect our children, seniors, and all people to live in safety in day-to-day life
 - Counselors support communities all over the country and acknowledge that experiencing a mass shooting causes devastating trauma, particularly in youth
 - Secondary trauma experienced by mental health workers
 - The *fear of* experiencing a mass shooting is also traumatic for children, youth, parents, and the general public
 - No American should have to live in constant fear for their safety
 - Ideally, ban on assault weapons would best protect our clients. However, bi-partisan cooperation is most important to create policy that will be implemented
 - We understand and respect the Second Amendment, but are looking to reduce gun violence and improve the safety and well-being of our clients and those that serve in the profession

Mental Health Access Improvement Act (S.828/H.R.432)

- **STATUS:** Introduced in the House and Senate
- **DETAILS:** Closes gap in federal law caused by outdated language preventing mental health counselors from being recognized as Medicare providers; gives counselors the ability to enroll as

a Medicare provider and receive reimbursement at an equal rate currently paid to social workers; improves accessibility of mental health care for people 65 and older, those under 65 with disabilities, and people with end stage renal disease; increases accessibility for U.S. Veterans

- **OUR STANCE:** This legislation allows Medicare beneficiaries to access more than 200,000 additional licensed and fully qualified mental health care providers
 - Those on Medicare currently lack access to 40% of behavioral health professionals with a master's degree (LPC/LMFT)
 - Is beneficial for all Americans as it improves the ease and ability of seeking and accessing much-needed mental health support
 - Ensures continuity of care when someone ages into Medicare or goes onto Medicare due to permanent disability

Women's Health Protection Act (H.R.3755/S.4132)

- **STATUS:** H.R. 3755 passed U.S. House of Representative 2/28/2022. S. 1975 and S. 4132 introduced in the Senate
- **DETAILS:** Protect the right to access abortion care throughout the country; protect against bans and medically unnecessary restrictions that do not apply to other similar health care procedures. These restrictions include six-week bans, 20-week bans, mandatory ultrasounds, biased counseling, waiting periods, and requirements that providers obtain admitting privileges at local hospitals.
- **OUR STANCE:** Women's health contributes to her overall well-being and mental health. A lack of access to women's healthcare may cause or exacerbate mental health challenges. As counselors, we support women's overall health and well-being, both mentally and physically.
 - Low-income and people of color are disproportionately affected by lack of access to needed healthcare
 - Protecting this right improves equity in healthcare for all women and child-bearing people in this country

Compacts, Access, and Responsible Expansion (C.A.R.E) for Mental Health Professionals Act (H.R.6076)

- **STATUS:** Introduced in the House
- **DETAILS:** Reforms licensure to include interstate mental health provider network; improve accessibility of mental health services across state lines by removing unnecessary licensure barriers to interstate counseling
- **OUR STANCE:** We support this bill as it will improve accessibility of mental health services to our clients and communities and ensure continuity of care
 - It is estimated that 120 million Americans live in areas with mental health service shortages
 - COVID-19 pandemic, gun violence pandemic, social justice issues all contribute to an increased need for mental health support for Americans
 - Portability of licensure would allow rural, disconnected, and economically disadvantaged communities to access needed support

Tele-Mental Health Improvement Act (S.660/HR.2264)

- **STATUS:** Introduced in the House and Senate
- **DETAILS:** Introduced by MD Representative David Trone and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN); requires group health plans and health insurers to cover mental health and substance use disorder telehealth services equally to in-person services, during and following the COVID-19 pandemic for a period of one year
- **OUR STANCE:** Many new instances of individuals suffering from anxiety, depression, and substance misuse over the last several years. In-person behavioral health services are not accessible to all given the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic: unreliable childcare, transportation, need for quarantining, etc. Ability to receive telehealth services will improve access to treatment while not further exposing individuals to COVID-19.
 - Improves equity of access to treatment

Increasing Access to Mental Health in Schools Act (H.R.3572/S.1811)

- **STATUS:** Introduced in the House and Senate
- **DETAILS:** Provides grants to “pipeline” partnership programs to increase the number of school-based mental health care providers at under-resourced schools; those eligible include individuals attending local educational agencies or institutions of higher education offering accredited graduate programs for school-based counselors/social workers/psychologists; student loan forgiveness provided for those ineligible upon completion of five years of employment at under-resources schools
- **OUR STANCE:** This bill increases the number of individuals able to pursue a career in mental health services, which will reduce the shortage of mental health care workers in the future
 - Will ensure students have access to needed mental health care services
 - Ensures a strong school-based mental health workforce

Stop Mental Health Stigma in Our Communities Act (H.R.3573)

- **STATUS:** Introduced in the House
- **DETAILS:** Intended to address mental health stigma among Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities; allows Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to conduct outreach and education strategies for these communities; partner with local advocacy and behavioral health organizations
- **OUR STANCE:** Ensures that all individuals and communities are able to seek and receive the mental health care they deserve
 - SAMHSA data shows that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have lowest mental health help-seeking rate of any racial or ethnic group in the country
 - Less than a quarter of AAPI adults with a mental illness are receiving treatment: over 2 millions AAPI individuals meeting criteria for a mental health issue are not receiving treatment
 - Suicide is the leading cause of death among AAPI youth aged 15 to 24
 - This bill reduces systemic barriers to accessing mental health services
 - Rise in racism and violence targeting Asian Americans has increased fears for safety and well-being within this community

Therapeutic Fraud Prevention Act of 2021 (H.R.4146/S.2242)

- **STATUS:** Introduced in the House and Senate
- **DETAILS:** Bans the harmful practice of conversion therapy; amends the Federal Trade Commission Act to clarify that receiving monetary compensation for providing conversion therapy is a deceptive practice
- **OUR STANCE:** Conversion therapy, which aims to alter an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, has been empirically demonstrated to be fraudulent and uncredible. Mental health professionals recognize this as a dangerous, damaging, and meritless practice. Mainstream medical and mental health organizations including the American Counseling Association (ACA), American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association and the American Medical Association, reject conversion therapy as unethical.
 - Young people are particularly susceptible to harm from conversion therapy, including the development of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide
 - Over 20 states and the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have implemented laws protecting youth from conversion therapy
 - We want to protect all Americans from this dangerous practice as thousands are still subjected to conversion therapy every year

Summary and next steps

Thank you and goodbye