

**Subject: Please Support Medicare Coverage for MHCs & MFTs (S. 562)**

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a constituent, licensed mental health counselor and member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association. I strongly urge you to co-sponsor S. 562, the “Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act.” This bi-partisan legislation, sponsored by Senators Ron Wyden and John Barrasso, authorizes Medicare payment of outpatient psychotherapy services provided by mental health counselors (MHCs) and marriage and family therapists (MFTs). This bill has twice passed the House and the Senate, just not simultaneously.

The current exclusion of MHCs from treating Medicare beneficiaries often results in denial of vital mental health services to those in need. Some beneficiaries are fortunate and find a Medicare eligible provider; others never receive needed care, driving up costs and tragically increasing morbidity and mortality among beneficiaries with mental health needs.

Medicare provider eligibility for MHCs and MFTs is long overdue. These two professions represent over 40 percent of today’s licensed mental health practitioners. Unfortunately, Medicare has not been modernized to recognize their essential contribution in today’s health delivery system. Congressional scoring rules obscure the dollars saved by utilizing their services to treat mental health conditions before they exacerbate into more serious mental and physical disorders. Benefits of this bill include:

- Improved mental health access for rural and underserved populations
- Earlier and more efficient use of Medicare mental health benefits
- Better integration of mental health and physical health care
- Reduced cost of physical health care, particularly for chronic conditions

I urge you to co-sponsor S. 562 to help ensure Medicare beneficiaries obtain needed and timely mental health care.

Sincerely,

Name

Address