



Association for Behavioral
Health and Wellness

*Advancing benefits and services
in mental health, substance use
and behavior change.*

October 13, 2015

The Honorable Christopher Gibson
United States House of Representatives
1708 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States House of Representatives
231 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gibson and Congressman Thompson:

The Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness (ABHW) expresses our support for H.R. 2759, the Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2015. We thank you for your leadership on the issue of recognizing more mental health providers under Medicare.

ABHW is the national voice for companies that manage behavioral health and wellness benefits. ABHW member companies provide specialty services to treat mental health, substance use, and other behaviors that impact health to approximately 150 million people in both the public and private sectors. ABHW and its member companies use their behavioral health expertise to improve health care outcomes for individuals and families across the health care spectrum.

ABHW believes Medicare should begin to cover additional provider types that are currently excluded from reimbursement. Despite high rates of mental health disorders, many Medicare beneficiaries do not have access to a mental health professional because of their remote locations and the shortage of mental health providers. In order to increase the array of providers available to Medicare beneficiaries and to decrease the workforce shortage, ABHW agrees that Medicare should recognize mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists.

As the House Energy and Commerce Committee turns its focus toward mental health reform this year, it is our hope that it will consider including your legislative language as a provision in the Committee's final bill. Expanding the pool of eligible mental health professionals by over 165,000 licensed practitioners would certainly play a significant role in increasing access to care and reforming our country's mental health system.

We look forward to continuing to work with your office on this and other mental health legislation. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 449-7660 or greenberg@abhw.org.

Sincerely,

Pamela Greenberg,
President and CEO, ABHW