

Maine Counseling Association
Public Policy Annual Report
April 11, 2022

As of this writing, the *Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2021* (the “medicare fix” bill, H.R. 432 and S. 828) is supported by our entire congressional delegation, with the addition of Rep. Golden on 10/27/21. We are thankful to our representatives and senators for their ongoing support of this measure, and it has not gone unnoticed by our parent organization that Maine consistently has obtained bipartisan support of our whole (admittedly small!) delegation. The measure currently has 70 cosponsors in the House and 25 in the Senate.

With regards to the ongoing struggles mental health therapy service providers have been experiencing with Anthem, we have submitted a letter to the Maine Bureau of Insurance Superintendent Eric Cioppa in support of Maine counselors and requesting that the Bureau get involved with holding Anthem accountable for fair and humane business practices with respect to mental health professionals. This issue seems to be gaining some traction in the media and with state regulatory agencies, as professional counselors, social workers, and others have advocated for fair treatment.

LD 1920 “An Act to Have Maine Join the Interstate Counseling Compact to Address Inequities in Access to Clinical Counseling Services and Increase Our Provider Workforce” sponsored by Jay McCreight, was passed by both the Maine house and senate after referral by the committee of Health Coverage, Insurance, and Financial Services, and signed into law by Governor Mills on 3/31/22. This law is meant to enhance ability for providers to use telehealth and to create opportunity for greater license portability & increase access for mental health services for underserved populations, including rural populations, people living in poverty, and people of color. It is further meant to provide for greater continuity of care with clients moving across state boundaries, such as members of the military community. Maine was the 7th state to sign this compact into law, and since then Florida and Kentucky have signed on as well, making 9 of the 10 necessary for the compact to take effect. MeCA provided testimony during the legislative committee hearings, and ACA and MeMHCA members were involved as well throughout the process.

Finally, recent press releases from ACA which have been forwarded to MeCA membership include statements condemning the attack on Ukraine by Russian forces and also the attack on trans youth in Texas by the governor and attorney general proclaiming gender-affirming care to be considered as “child abuse” and for state child protective services to act accordingly (this order was blocked by a Texas judge and is now being appealed to the state supreme court).

Respectfully submitted,
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Public Policy Chair, Maine Counseling Association