

PRESS RELEASE

Medical Society of the District of Columbia Applauds Passage of the Behavioral Health Parity Act
Bill would ensure that Washington, D.C. is a leader in providing mental health coverage

Washington, D.C., December 4, 2018 –The Medical Society of the District of Columbia ([MSDC](http://www.msdc.org)), the largest medical organization in the District of Columbia representing Washington-area physicians and long-time behavioral health advocate, commends the Council of the District of Columbia for passing the Behavioral Health Parity Act of 2017 (B22-597) today. MSDC urges the mayor to promptly sign the bill into law, thereby positioning the District of Columbia as a model for the nation on behavioral health at a time when the nation’s behavioral health needs are rapidly increasing.

The bill ensures that federal law regarding behavioral health parity is codified into DC law, adding an extra level of protection for patients. The bill also expands parity for the District’s Medicaid program, thereby addressing significant unmet behavioral health needs of the District’s neediest patients. According to the 2013 District of Columbia Community Health Needs Assessment, in Washington, D.C., 60 percent of adults enrolled in Medicaid managed care with a diagnosis of depression had an unmet need for depression care. The Behavioral Health Parity Act aims to address the overall shortfall in behavioral health care by requiring insurance carriers to meet the provisions outlined in the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. These changes will ensure that any patient who seeks behavioral mental health will have services covered by their insurer. Signing the Behavioral Health Parity Act into law will demonstrate the District of Columbia’s leadership on behavioral health for Washingtonians.

“I applaud the Council for passing this progressive, proactive legislation,” said MSDC executive vice president Robert Hay Jr. “So many of the public health issues in our city are tied to behavioral health. With the passage of this bill, DC is again a leader in health care and mental health treatment. We look forward to working with DISB and the other agencies to implement the legislation.”

As a voice for all physicians, MSDC is an advocate in the fight for patient access to medically necessary care, and has a history of success in behavioral health. In December 2017, MSDC sent [a letter of support](#) to the Committee on Health making a strong case to pass the Behavioral Health Parity Act. In 2015, MSDC led a stakeholder group to pass the Behavioral Health Coordination of Care Amendment Act (B21-7). That bill permitted the disclosure of a consumer’s mental health information between mental health facilities and health professionals caring for the patient, to ensure better coordination of care. The Medical Society will continue to support behavioral health parity as the bill moves through the legislative process, and MSDC will continue its legacy of voicing concerns on behalf of all physicians and their patients.

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About the Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC)

With over 2,500 members, the Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC) is the largest medical organization in the District representing metropolitan Washington physicians. MSDC is dedicated to the well-being of the physicians in metropolitan Washington and their patients. Since 1817, MSDC has been supporting and advocating for patients, physicians, the medical profession and the betterment of public health. Our membership comprises licensed physicians, medical residents, medical students and allied health professionals in metropolitan Washington. For more, visit www.msdc.org.