

HealthImaging.org: "Senate bill would extend incentives to behavioral health"

By Editorial Staff

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Senate bill would extend incentives to behavioral health

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Rhode Island U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse has introduced legislation to make available health IT to behavioral health, mental health and substance abuse treatment professionals and facilities.

"Mental healthcare is a critical component of our healthcare safety net, and allowing these providers access to cost-saving, quality-enhancing advances in health IT will improve the care that millions of American receive," said Whitehouse.

If enacted, the Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2011 (S. 539) would:

- Expand the types of providers eligible for Medicare and Medicaid incentives for the use of EHRs to include licensed psychologists and clinical social workers;
- Expand Medicare hospital incentive funding eligibility to include inpatient psychiatric hospitals;
- Expand Medicaid hospital meaningful use incentive funding eligibility to include community mental health centers, mental health treatment facilities, psychiatric hospitals and substance abuse treatment facilities; and
- Clarify eligibility of community mental health centers, psychiatric hospitals, behavioral and mental health professionals, substance abuse professionals, mental health treatment facilities and substance abuse treatment facilities for technical assistance from regional extension centers.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.