

# Psychology leaders complete 300 visits to members of Congress in one day

Practitioners ask legislators to sign onto Medicare “physician definition” bill.

Psychologists and psychology graduate students representing 50 state psychological associations made more than 300 lobbying visits to their members of Congress on March 13, 2018, advocating **for psychologists and Americans’ access to mental health services**. Psychologists, graduate students and executive directors for state psychological associations were in Washington, D.C., for the 2018 Practice Leadership Conference hosted by the APA Practice Organization and APA. This annual conference brings together psychology leaders from across the U.S. for four days of advocacy leadership training, culminating with visits to members of Congress.



Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., with N.J. Psychological Association delegation

Conference attendees met with their senators and representatives, including in-person meetings with Sens. Cory Booker, D-N.J., John Boozman, R-Ark., Shelley Moore Capito, R-W. Va., Dean Heller, R-Nev., Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., as well as Reps. Doris Matsui, D-Calif., Adrian Smith, R-Neb., and Jackie Walorski, R-Ind., among others.



Rep. Adrian Smith, R-Neb., with Neb. Psychological Association delegation.

Psychology leaders asked members of Congress to pass the **“Medicare Mental Health Access Act” (H.R. 1173, S. 448)**, bipartisan legislation that would allow psychologists to practice independently without physician supervision in all treatment settings under Medicare. The legislation is sponsored by U.S. Reps. Kristi Noem, R-S.D., and Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., in the House and by Sens. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and Susan Collins, R-Maine in the Senate.



Maryland Psychological Association delegation in front of the U.S. Capitol.

If enacted, the Medicare Mental Health Access Act would remove a roadblock to mental health treatment for Medicare beneficiaries in certain treatment facilities. Although psychologists are licensed to practice independently in all U.S. states and jurisdictions, Medicare still requires unnecessary physician sign-off and oversight of their services in some settings, hampering or

even preventing delivery of needed care. Passing the act would also remove this barrier by **adding clinical psychologists to the list of providers in Medicare's definition of a "physician,"** which already includes podiatrists, chiropractors, optometrists and dentists. Psychologists are the only doctoral-level providers not included. Additionally, psychologists would be eligible for 10 percent Medicare bonus payments for services delivered in federally designated mental health professional shortage areas.

For more information, check out the Medicare Mental Health Act [fact sheet](#) (PDF, 616KB).