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# Advocacy in Action

A NEWSLETTER OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNSELING ASSOCIATION'S  
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

My name is Travis Schermer and I chair the Government Relations Committee (GRC) for the Pennsylvania Counseling Association (PCA). It is an honor to serve in this role and to build on the committee's successes. From Dr. David Hall who led this committee during the establishment of the LPC in 1998 to Dr. Nellie Scanlon who championed the addition of "diagnosis" in 2018, this history of vision, strength, and unwavering belief in the integrity of the counseling profession inspires me to this day.

As the GRC grows, so do the challenges and opportunities for our profession. These include increased access to services, telehealth, interstate compacts, parity, and issues of social justice. The GRC supports PA counselors by tracking legislation, contacting legislators, and communicating with stakeholders regarding these issues. We also maintain contact with American Counseling Association staff to ensure a confluence between state and national efforts. While we are proud of the work we are doing, we need all PA counselors' support.

We must unite our profession through PCA in order to elevate the profile of LPCs in our state. Being able to introduce, support, and amend legislation is connected to the power of our collective voice. It is through PCA that we can share a united message, which becomes stronger when it represents all LPCs in the Commonwealth. For this reason, I encourage you to discuss the importance of membership in PCA with your colleagues, supervisees, and students.

This issue of Advocacy in Action is the first of what will be a bi-annual newsletter from the Government Relations Committee. It is intended to do the following for PCA membership: (a) promote awareness of counseling-related legislation; (b) increase visibility and accessibility of advocacy efforts; and (c) unite LPCs around shared professional concerns and interests.

On behalf of the GRC, we hope you will join us in promoting the counseling profession in PA and beyond. We look forward to working with you more closely in the future.

Be well,  
Travis Schermer, LPC  
PCA Government Relations Chair

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### REACH OUT TO THE PCA GRC!

- General GRC Contact  
[advocacy.PCA@gmail.com](mailto:advocacy.PCA@gmail.com)
- [PCA GRC Webpage](#)
- Maddie Stevens, PhD  
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PENNSYLVANIA COUNSELING  
ASSOCIATION

*A Branch of the American Counseling Association*



# Legislative Advocacy Day 2022

The PCA GRC is hosting its fourth annual Legislative Advocacy Day (LAD) on Saturday, April 2, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. via Zoom. This FREE synchronous virtual event will host presentations from ACA, ethics leaders, and your Government Relations team.

**REGISTER  
for LAD 2022  
HERE!**

One continuing education credit (CE) will be offered for participating in LAD. You'll also learn how to get involved in government relations and professional advocacy as well as learn more about the ACA Interstate Counseling Compact and its impact on PA counselors.

## PROFESSIONAL ISSUE INFO

## ACA INTERSTATE COUNSELING COMPACT

Pennsylvania's counselors have the opportunity to expand their practicing privileges into other states. The ACA Interstate Counseling Compact is the newest strategy for professional counselors to increase licensure portability while maintaining states' regulatory integrity of their licensees and improving public access to licensed professional counselors.

### HOW IT WORKS.

Counselors practicing in member states of the compact will have the ability to apply for interstate practicing privileges in other member states. Counselors who maintain active, unencumbered licenses in their practicing state, with an approved application, would be able to conduct both telehealth and in-person sessions across state lines in fellow member compact states. States would still retain the right to regulate counselor practice. Further, potential compact states must meet baseline criteria to ensure professional integrity.

The impacts of the compact extend beyond individual counselors. Many rural communities are chronically underserved, and physical distance to a counselor can prevent care from occurring. Families of military members that consistently need to travel can see their ability to receive care drastically cut. Simply put, this proposed legislation will allow more people to have increased access to mental health services.

### MAKING THE COMPACT A REALITY.

The ACA Interstate Counseling Compact will go into effect when 10 states enact legislation which identifies the state as a member of the compact. Currently, Georgia and Maryland have fully passed the compact. Legislation is pending in 19 other states. The PCA Government Relations Committee and other Pennsylvania counseling leaders are working to support our state's involvement in the compact.

We are eager to hear from Pennsylvania counselors regarding your interest in this initiative and how it may impact your practice. Reach out to the PCA GRC with your input!





# MEET THE PCA GRC!

Reach out to your committee members to get involved and provide input! Visit the PCA GRC webpage for additional information.



**Travis Schermer, PhD (he/him)**

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Travis works as a counselor educator at Carlow University and a professional counselor at the Center for Counseling Arts. He is a proud PCA member and serves as the current chair for the PCA GRC.



**Scott Baker, PhD, LPC (he/him)**

[sbaker@cccmer.org](mailto:sbaker@cccmer.org)

Scott is a licensed counselor in three states, and he has provided a wide range of counseling services. His work experience includes crisis and disaster response, addictions counseling, mental health counseling with children and adults, custody evaluation, psychological evaluation, reunification counseling, co-parenting counseling, parenting coordination, and counselor education and supervision.



**Maddie Stevens, PhD (she/her)**

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Maddie is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Duquesne University and also works as a counselor in a private practice. She has extensive experience in government relations and professional advocacy and is eager to support PA counselors in their legislative advocacy efforts. She currently serves as editor the the Advocacy in Action newsletter.



**Pat McGowan, Doctoral Student (they/them)**

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Pat graduated from Duquesne University's master's program in August 2021 and is currently a first-year doctoral student in the Duquesne University Counselor Education and Supervision program. They are working toward their LPC in PA at TRAC Services for Families.



**Sarah Murphy, LPC (she/her)**

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Sarah has more than 15 years of clinical experience. She specializes in working with those who have chronic or serious illness. She uses mind-body therapeutic tools such as meditation and energy psychology. In addition to her private therapy practice, Sarah is Staff Counselor for Unite for HER.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# LOAN FORGIVENESS BILL FOR MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Two bills are making their way through Harrisburg which aim to recruit more people into the mental health services professions by offering student loan forgiveness. This could be a game-changer for people in our field! We encourage you to call your legislators to support these bills.



The proposed acts are intended to address staff shortages in mental health, intellectual disabilities, and substance use disorder treatment by enticing people through "payment of a portion of student loans" if they join the profession. The House bill (HB 2384) addresses providers of mental health and intellectual disabilities services, and the Senate bill (SB 94) addresses substance use disorder treatment providers.

## Want to help make this a reality?

### Call your legislators:

- To support the House bill, [contact your State Representative.](#)
- To support the Senate bill, [contact your State Senator.](#)

### Send a letter or email:

- [Click here or a template letter](#) which you can amend and send to your Senator or Representative,

## For providers to qualify for loan repayment, they would have to:

1. be a resident of the Commonwealth,
2. possess a two-year, four-year, or graduate degree from an accredited school,
3. be hired full time by a county agency or an agency that provides services for a county,
4. complete six months of employment and stay in good standing with that agency,
5. perform staff duties at that agency,
6. have an outstanding balance on their student loans, and
7. agree to work in the field for at least four years.