



## ACA Government Affairs and Public Policy **2022 YEAR END REPORT**

**Due to many challenges facing our nation,** 2022 began as a year of uncertainty within the halls of Government. But it was also one of collaboration and progress for the American Counseling Association, and the counseling profession.

While meeting the needs of our members, the pandemic continued to present challenges that would affect counselors and the clients that they serve. Through steadfast leadership we were able to experience success in several areas including:

- The Counseling Compact, where we surpassed the number of states needed to activate the compacts governing entity.
- Increasing access to professional careers for counselors within the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). Counselors within the VA are being hired at the highest rate in the history of counselor employment at the VA.
- Successfully advocated the passage of the Mental Health Access Improvement Act, which will begin providing reimbursement for professional counselors on January 1, 2024.

This calendar year we also witnessed increased collaboration among our external partners, and increased advocacy engagement among ACA membership. With our success there were also challenges. In this report you will learn about the successes, as well as the challenges, and what steps the profession must take to remain relevant within the Halls of Government.

# ACA Advocacy

## January 2022 – December 2022

	2021	2022	% Increase/decrease from 2021–2022
<b>Number of Actions</b> *Actions are the number of messages, survey responses, and/or calls sent by one person utilizing VoterVOICE (VV)/ Example: Person X responds to a VV, and the message is sent to three offices on Capitol Hill: 1 to the House and 2 to the Senate.	4,851	19,539	+~ <b>402.8%</b>
<b>Number of New Advocates</b> *New advocates are individuals (members and nonmembers) who have completed an action (defined above) for the first time utilizing VoterVOICE	2,935	10,100	+~ <b>344.1%</b>
<b>Number of Letters to the Hill</b>	14,197	57,966	+~ <b>408.3%</b>



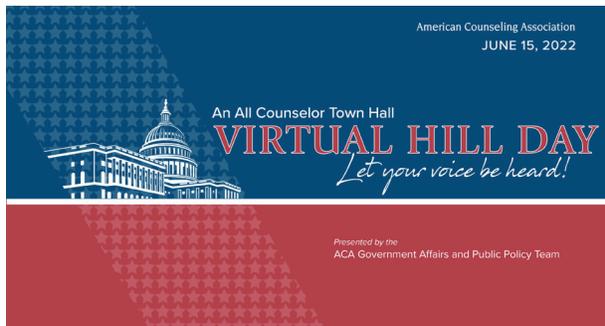
## Non-Hill Actions (Letters, States, etc)

Title of Letter	Organization/Recipient
<b>Senate Request for Information</b>	<b>Senate Finance Committee</b>

Meeting/Presentation Attended	Organization
<b>ACA of New York</b>	ACA of NY
<b>ACA Public Policy and Legislation Committee</b>	ACA
<b>Advocacy Power Hour</b>	ACA Branches
<b>ASAE Mental Health Series Webinar</b>	American Society of Assoc. Executives
<b>Connecticut Counseling Association</b>	ACA of Connecticut
<b>Committee for Education Funding (CEF)</b>	CEF
<b>Counseling Compact Legislative Summit</b>	CSG-NCIC
<b>Counseling Compact Commission</b>	Counseling Compact Commission
<b>DCMHCA Coalition Mtg with City Council Staffer</b>	DCMHCA
<b>Department of Defense - State Liaison Office</b>	Department of Defense
<b>Dobbs v. Jackson (Guidance for Helping Profession)</b>	SAMHSA/HHS
<b>HRC Thrive Coalition</b>	HRC
<b>Leadership and Advocacy Course</b>	The Ohio State University
<b>National Career Development Conference – Legislative Update</b>	National Career Development Association
<b>Nation Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (NCMHA)</b>	Coalition
<b>North Atlantic Region Annual Conference</b>	ACA
<b>North Carolina Senate Health Committee Hearing</b>	NC Senate
<b>Mental Health Workforce Coalition Meetings</b>	Mental Health Workforce Coalition
<b>MS Counseling Board</b>	MS Counseling Board
<b>STRIDE-Social Impact Summit</b>	Public Affairs Council

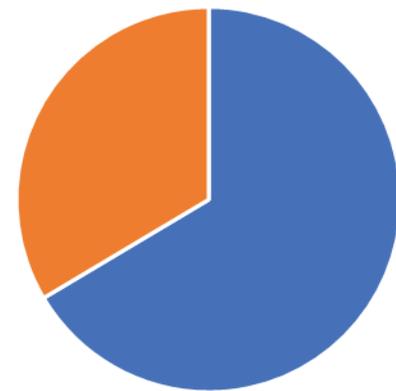
<b>Title IV-A Coalition Meetings</b>	Title IV-A Coalition Meetings
<b>Voice of Counseling</b>	ACA
<b>WA Counseling Graduate Students</b>	Antioch University & ACA of WA
<b>WA Department of Health Board Meeting</b>	Advisory Committee WA DOH
<b>Western Region</b>	Western Region
<b>WA Department of Health Board Meeting</b>	Advisory Committee WA DOH
<b>2022 CSG National Conference</b>	The Council of State Governments
<b>2023 Nourishing Black Communities Roundtable</b>	Stanford University-Clinical Research Center

## 2022 Virtual Hill Day



This year's Virtual Hill Day yielded **270** attendees and **535** registrants, with **5** Governing Council members participating in meetings with legislators.

Virtual Hill Day Participation



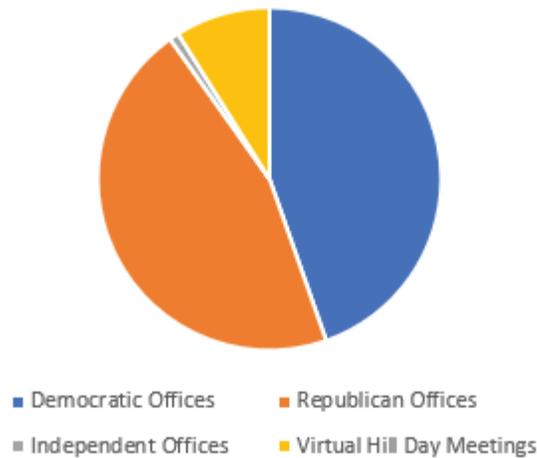
■ # of Registrants ■ # of Attendees

## 2022 Virtual Hill Day Speakers:

- Brian D. Banks, *Chief Government Affairs and Public Policy Officer*
- Darla York, *Medicare Client from Miami County, OH*
- Dr. Donna Ferguson, *LMHC Chief, Behavioral Science Education and Training Division, Department of Defense*
- Dr. Isabel Farrell, *Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, Wake Forest University and ACA PPLC Co-Chair*
- Kristine Blackwood, *JD, Counsel at Arnold & Porter*
- Mara Boggs, *State Director for U.S Senator Joe Manchin*
- Dr. Matt Fullen, *LMHC Assistant Professor of Counselor Education, Virginia Tech*
- Nichelle Schoultz (had to pull out day of for family emergency), *District Director for Congressman Anthony Brown*
- Terrance Taylor, *District Director for Congressman Steny H. Hoyer*

## 2022 Congressional Meetings:

Number of Hill Meetings for 2022



The chart above highlights, the number of meetings with legislators with **50** Democratic Offices, **51** Republican Offices, **1** Independent Office

## Non-Congressional Meetings:

- Counseling Compact (55 Meetings)
- Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) 2 Meetings
- Government Accountability Office (GAO) 4 meetings

## Federal Sign-On Letters

Topic	Purpose	Sent To
<b>H.R. 5526/S. 2930, the Improving Mental Health and Wellness in Schools Act</b>	<i>Letter of support for H.R. 5526/S. 2930, the Improving Mental Health and Wellness in Schools Act, signed by 43 members of the Mental Health Liaison Group.</i>	Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Boozman, and Ranking Member Foxx
<b>Funding for critical mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery programs</b>	<i>MHLG urges Congress to pass bipartisan legislation as soon as possible that prioritizes funding for critical mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.</i>	

<p><b>“Youth Mental Health: Part I – An Advisory and Call to Action.”</b></p>	<p><i>MHLG submits statement for the record for the U.S. Senate Finance Committee hearing entitled “Youth Mental Health: Part I – An Advisory and Call to Action.”</i></p>	<p>Sen. Ron Wyden Sen. Mike Crapo</p>
<p><b>Anna Westin Legacy Act</b></p>	<p><i>MHLG and the Eating Disorders Coalition submitted a letter in support of the bipartisan and bicameral Anna Westin Legacy Act, which would continue primary care provider trainings in eating disorders screening, interventional, and referral to treatment, as well as expand resources to the pediatric level. The Anna Westin Legacy Act is under consideration for the upcoming CURES mental health reauthorization package in both chambers.</i></p>	<p>Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Pallone, and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers</p>
<p><b>Strengthen Kids Mental Health Now Act Support Letter</b></p>	<p><i>Bolster support for pediatric mental health services under Medicaid</i></p>	<p>Rep. Anna Eshoo Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester</p>
<p><b>Kids Online Safety Act</b></p>	<p><i>To express our strong support for the bipartisan Kids Online Safety Act (S. 3663) led by Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), which is a comprehensive bill to protect children from social media platform harms and hold large tech companies accountable.</i></p>	<p>Senators - Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker</p>
<p><b>Virtual Peer Support</b></p>	<p><i>Virtual Peer Support Act which aims to create a grant program that provides a one-time grant to enable eligible local, tribal, and national peer-led organizations who currently offer behavioral health peer support services to expand online behavioral health services and increase the reach of peer support programs to meet the heightened need during the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter is being sent to the chairs and ranking members of the Senate HELP and House Energy and Commerce Committees.</i></p>	<p>Senators - Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Burr, Chairman Pallone, and Ranking Member Rodgers</p>

<p><b>H.R. 3753/S.1962, the Parity Implementation Assistance Act</b></p>	<p><i>Letter of support for H.R. 3753/S.1962, the Parity Implementation Assistance Act. This legislation will ensure that states are able to implement the new requirements that were added to the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (federal parity act).</i></p>	<p>Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chair Murray, and Ranking Member Burr</p>
<p><b>MHLG Support for H.R. 3173/S. 3018, The Improving Seniors Timely Access to Care Act</b></p>	<p><i>A letter in support of the Improving Seniors Timely Access to Care Act, which would streamline and standardize prior authorization procedures in the Medicare Advantage program to help protect patients from unnecessary delays in care.</i></p>	<p>Representatives DelBene, Kelly, Bera, and Bucshon and Senators Marshall, Sinema, Thune, and Brown</p>
<p><b>Bipartisan Safer Communities Act</b></p>	<p><i>To express immense gratitude for the inclusion of unprecedented and life-saving mental health and substance use investments in the historic Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.</i></p>	<p>Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy</p>
<p><b>H.R. 4040 - Advancing TeleHealth Beyond COVID-19 Act of 2021</b></p>	<p><i>Letter of support for H.R. 4040, the Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act of 2021</i></p>	<p>Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Crapo</p>
<p><b>H.R.8391, the Continuity in Necessary Evaluative Crisis Treatment (CONNECT) Act,</b></p>	<p><i>Letter of support for H.R.8391, the Continuity in Necessary Evaluative Crisis Treatment (CONNECT) Act, to authorize grant funding opportunities to help crisis centers provide follow-up treatment for individuals receiving suicide prevention and crisis intervention services.</i></p>	<p>Representative Trone and Representative Fitzpatrick</p>
<p><b>End-of-year Omnibus Package</b></p>	<p><i>To include a full continuum of mental health services and support for Americans within the end-of-year Omnibus package.</i></p>	<p>Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy</p>
<p><b>Expanding Access to Mental Health Training Act (S.4461)</b></p>	<p><i>Letter of support for Expanding Access to Mental Health Training Act (S.4461), to reauthorize and expand Mental Health Awareness Training (MHAT) under SAMSHA.</i></p>	<p>Senator Jacky Rosen and Senator Bill Cassidy</p>
<p><b>Title IV-A Coalition Appropriations Letter</b></p>	<p><i>Urge to fund Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grant program to invest in safe and healthy students</i></p>	<p>Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman Murray, Ranking Member Blunt, and Ranking Member Cole</p>
<p><b>End-of-year package that prioritizes the mental and behavioral health of Americans.</b></p>	<p><i>To implore Congress to enact a comprehensive, end-of-year package that prioritizes the mental and behavioral health of Americans.</i></p>	<p>117<sup>th</sup> Congress</p>

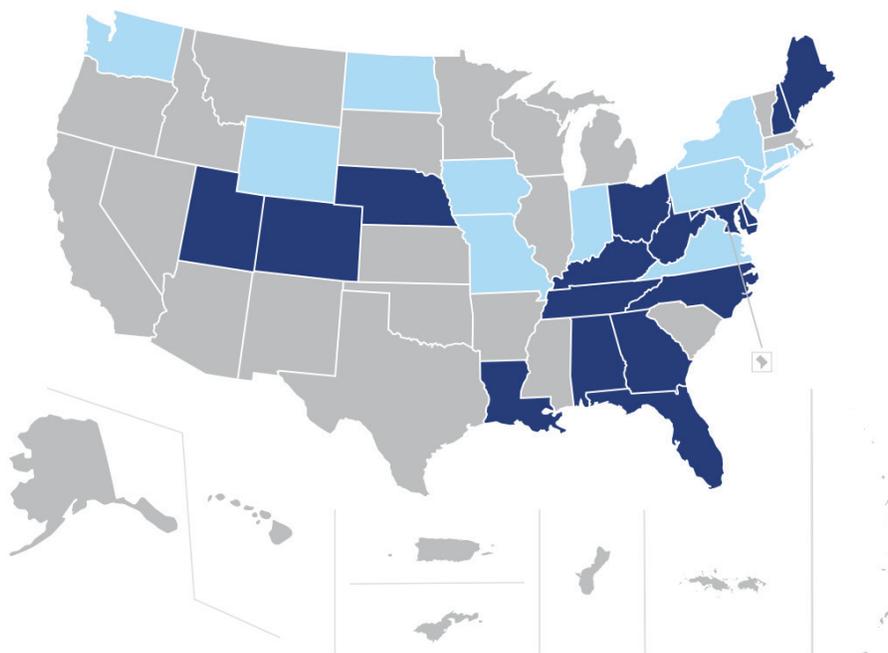
## Partner Coalitions List

- Building Hope – Mental Health Community Strategy Group (Reimagine Crisis)
- Committee for Education Funding
- Counseling Compact Advisory Group- ACA, NBCC, AMHCA
- Medicare Mental Health Workforce Coalition – National Coalition with the sole purpose of obtaining Medicare Reimbursement for LPCs and MFTS
- Medicare MH Workforce Coalition Communication - Workgroup
- CMS Workgroup
- Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) – Congressional Advocate Group
- MHLG Telehealth Workgroup
- National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging – Designed to Support and Engage on Policy for Older Americans
- NCDAs – Government Affairs Policy Group
- State Parity Workgroup – Review and Engage on State Parity Initiatives
- Title IV-A Coalition – Funding and Resource for School Counselors
- White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health – Planning Group

## The Counseling Compact

As of December, there are 17 member states which have enacted the Compact: **Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia.**

■ Legislation Not Introduced   ■ Legislation Pending   ■ Legislation Enacted   ■ Legislation Not Enacted



The Counseling Compact is an interstate compact, or a contract among states, allowing professional counselors licensed and residing in a compact member state to practice in other compact member states without need for multiple licenses. Through the Compact, professional counselors who meet uniform licensure requirements can quickly obtain a privilege to practice, which is equivalent to a license to practice counseling in another state. The Compact creates a public commission authorized to administer compact privileges and oversee a national counseling database.

Now that the Counseling Compact has surpassed its activation number of 10 states, the Compact held its [two-day inaugural meeting of the public commission](#) in October of 2022. At this meeting, delegates selected from the licensing board of each member state began the process of adopting rules and bylaws, establishing the structure of the Commission, and setting up the data system. Delegates successfully elected their Executive Committee and began creating the structure necessary for operation. [American Counseling Association \(ACA\) was approved as an ex-officio member of the Compact Commission.](#)

As with all public entities, commission meetings are bound by the Open Meetings Act (OMA) and are publicly accessible. Public meeting minutes, future meetings, registration for attendance, and further information can be found at [CounselingCompact.Org](#) under the Public Commission header. After the activation process is complete, the Compact Commission will be ready to start granting privileges to practice for Licensed Professional Counselors. We anticipate the application for privileges to practice will be available in late 2023 or early 2024 for counselors in member states.

The Compact is currently introduced in 11 state legislatures as we begin the 2023 legislative cycle. In the last legislative cycle, the Compact was introduced in 23 states. We anticipate similar continued interest in the Compact. In all states thus far, there has been no opposition to the bill, and it has received widespread bipartisan support. Both major parties agree: the self-funded Compact streamlines regulatory processes, removing barriers to services, without compromising public safety or uniform standards. It is the gold standard for practice across state lines.

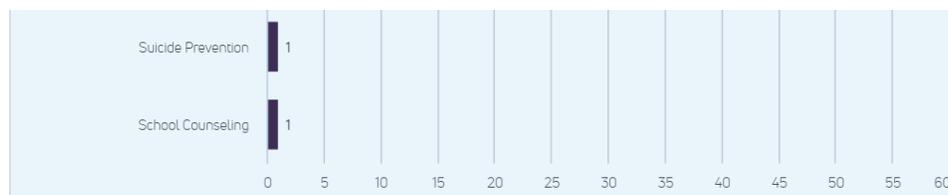
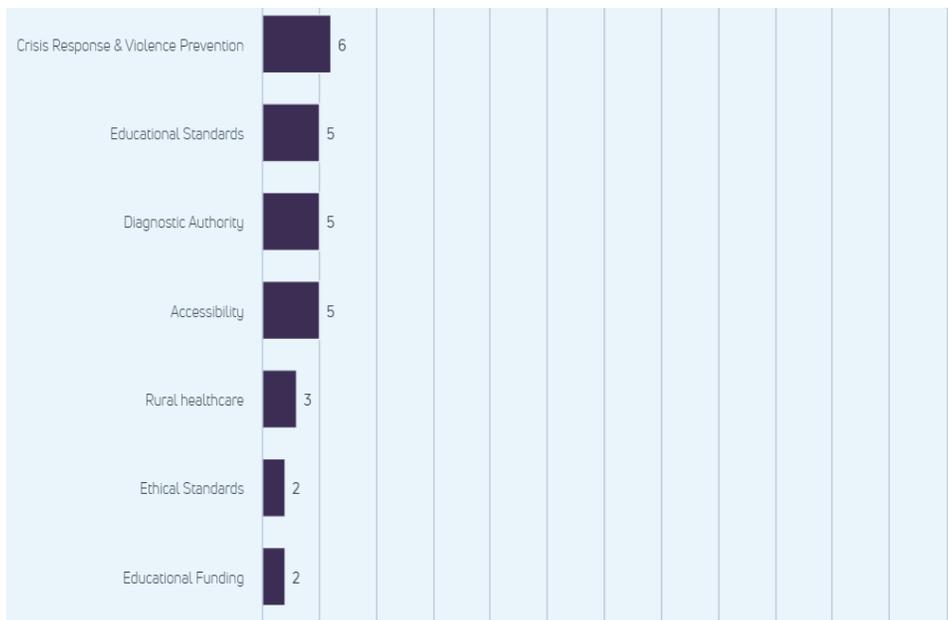
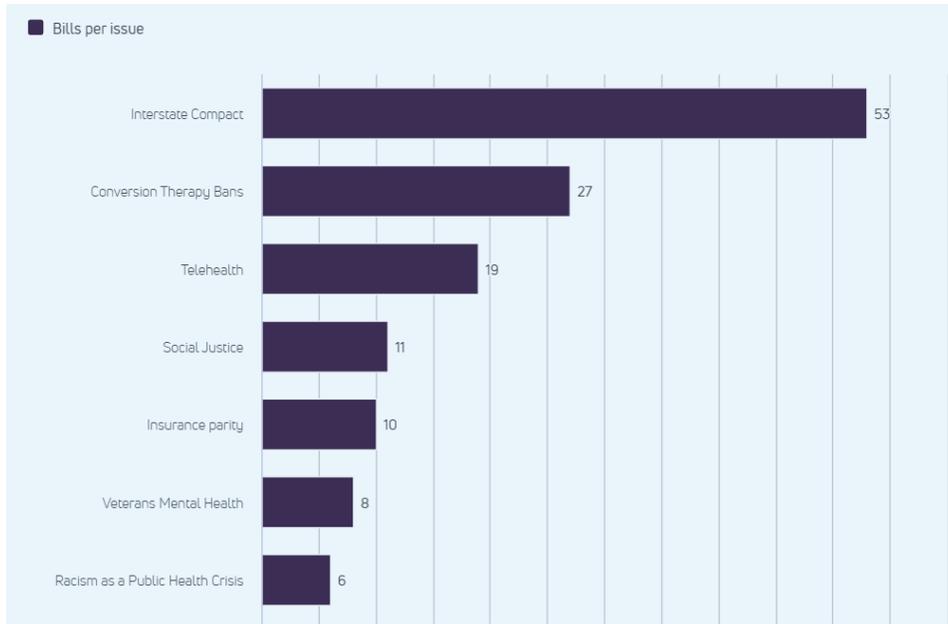
Our Government Affairs team will continue to support our branches and members in their advocacy on behalf of the Compact during state sessions. This includes:

- Strategic aid in identifying bill sponsors.
- Legislative outreach.
- Campaign development.
- Bill drafting.
- Testimony at bill hearings.
- The facilitation of data sharing and communication with the Legal Counsel at Council of State Governments, National Center for Interstate Compacts (CSG-NCIC).

### **Additional State Policy Efforts:**

Through consistent legislative tracking and membership engagement, including but not limited to bi-monthly Advocacy Power Hours (APH) with ACA state branches and ACA regional leaders, our team supports the development of state policy in all 50 states and U.S. territories.

## Number of Bills Per Issue:



## Annual State Proclamation Campaigns:

- National School Counseling Week
- Counseling Awareness Month
- BIPOC Mental Health Month
- Suicide Prevention Month

## Documents/Resources Generated Including Virtual Events (not Hill Day):

- AAPI Policy Template for States
- ACA Legislative Agenda
- ACA Medicare Brief
- Advocating for the Counseling Profession as a Graduate Student
- Counseling Compact one pagers and legislative materials by state
- FAQ on the Passage of the Mental Health Access Improvement Act
- Government Affairs and Public Policy Advocacy Toolkit
- Latest News Updates throughout the calendar year
- Licensing Resource
- Medicare Facts by States
- Portability Resources
- Proclamation Guide
- Tele-behavioral Health for States
- 2022 Podcast on Advocacy



## GAPP Staff Recognition:

National Institute for Lobbying and Ethics 2021 Lobbyist of the Year - *Guila Todd*

National Institute for Lobbying and Ethics 2022 Lobbyist of the Year – *Brian D. Banks*

The Hill Newspaper Lobbyist of the Year – *Brian D. Banks*

Top 20 in Twenty-Two Advocacy Award: The Advocacy Association – *Dominique N. Marsalek*

## GAPP Volunteer, Appointments and Clubs in Which They are Involved:

Family and Children’s Trust Fund of Virginia - *Dominique N. Marsalek*, *Gubernatorial Appointee*

Advisory Board for National Foster Youth Career Development Center – *Dominique N. Marsalek*

BestKids DC Mentoring – *Dominique N. Marsalek*

American Health Lawyers Association – *Dania Y. Lofton*

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Social Action Commission – *Dania Y. Lofton*

Civic Engagement Ministry – *Brian D. Banks*

Sports Ministry – *Brian D. Banks*

Women in Government Relations – *Dominique N. Marsalek*, *Dania Y. Lofton*, *Sydney Sinclair*

## Progress/Challenges/Needs:

2022 was not only a historic year for the counseling profession, but it was also an historic year for the United States of America. Despite the challenges in government, we were able to make the idea of a Counseling Compact reality and update the Medicare program which was last updated thirty-four years ago in 1989.

Our success will only go as far as we take it. Thus, the American Counseling Association must continue to engage its members and non-members to engage with legislators, and to remain active in their communities. A challenge we must overcome is active participation by counselors in policy areas that affect the profession.

The American Counseling Association has a robust legislative agenda. This agenda continues to have a focus on Medicare Reimbursement, as we work with the appropriate agencies to implement the program. We also will continue working with state legislatures to ensure we bring on more states to pass counseling compact laws, thus increasing opportunities for counselors to care for clients throughout the country.

There is a lot of work to do to improve parity and inclusion within the profession. Counselors are still not able to work as Commissioned Officer in the US Public Health Service Commission (USPHS) or the Army Medical Corps Officer Programs (AMCO), when our counterparts in Social Work and Psychology are. We also need to create additional sources of funding and resources for school and career counselors.

All while working to make telehealth a permanent program in this country and fully implementing 988 the suicide and trauma prevention hotline, increasing leadership roles for counselors working in the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, and working with Congress on bills that support improvements in Maternal Mental Health.

We have a long way to go. And we have the team to help move these issues forward. To get this done we will need an increase in support from professional counselors.

***Cheers to a successful 2022, and here's to an even bigger 2023!***