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Media contact: Abigail Woodworth

Ph: 212-243-1313 x 136

E: awoodworth@lac.org

Comprehensive Insurance Coverage is Critical to Stemming Opioid Crisis *Addiction Experts Oppose BCRA*

Our nation's escalating opioid crisis – with more than 144 people dying every day from overdose – will not abate without access to comprehensive substance use disorder treatment in private insurance and Medicaid. The Senate's version of healthcare repeal would cripple national efforts to address this public health epidemic.

No time-limited infusion of federal dollars for addiction treatment can fill the gaping coverage and financing holes, meet the unmet need for substance use treatment, or prevent the significant disruption in health care delivery that will result under the enactment of the Better Care Reconciliation Act (BCRA).

Research has clearly shown that substance use disorders are complex, chronic medical conditions, best treated with comprehensive and integrated care. Until the passage of the Affordable Care Act, substance use disorders were financed and treated separately from the rest of healthcare, largely through government funded block grants. This produced a truly segregated, seriously under-resourced system that contributed to the current addiction epidemic in this country and perpetuated discrimination.

Separate funding to address the opioid crisis will not meet the overarching healthcare needs of patients struggling with addiction, who often have numerous co-occurring health problems that must also be addressed. It will not adequately support prevention for SUDs, nor the long-term recovery management that is indicated for chronic medical illnesses.

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that BCRA would cut Medicaid funding by \$772 billion, as the bill would impose caps on federal Medicaid funds and end the Medicaid expansion. These changes would mean that millions of people with substance use disorders would lose coverage for lifesaving treatment. Approximately half of Medicaid enrollees have substance use or mental health disorders, and Medicaid pays for approximately 30% of the cost of medications to treat addiction. Countless people who are currently in treatment and on the road to recovery would lose access to the critical services needed to maintain their health. The rate of opioid fatality would sharply rise.

The BCRA will end significant progress in creating a stable and sustainable financing structure for substance use treatment through Medicaid and private insurance, stripping away addiction coverage from millions of Americans who desperately need it. Further, it would reinstate discriminatory coverage of substance use treatment by allowing states to waive such benefits in Essential Health Benefit-based plans and reinstate underwriting for pre-existing conditions making coverage for addiction treatment unaffordable for many Americans.

The Senate healthcare repeal plan, which would leave 22 million Americans uninsured, is untenable. It will be particularly devastating to millions of Americans who have complex or pre-existing conditions, including substance use disorders. If enacted, the BCRA would undercut our national efforts to stem the opioid crisis, dramatically cutting funding for critical life-saving treatments.

The undersigned individuals and institutions represent leaders in the field of addiction care, research and policy. **We urge Congress to reject this harmful legislation. The devastation caused by the Senate bill will not be ameliorated by a short-term infusion of grant funding to address the opioid epidemic.**

Paul Samuels, JD
President/Director
Legal Action Center

Marcia Lee Taylor
Chief Policy Officer
Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

Michael Botticelli
Executive Director, Grayken Center for
Addiction Medicine
Boston Medical Center
Former Director, White House Office of
National Drug Control Policy

Ronald Manderscheid
Executive Director
NACBHDD - National Association of County Behavioral
Health and Developmental Disability Directors
NARMH - National Association for Rural Mental Health

Patty McCarthy Metcalf
Executive Director
Faces & Voices of Recovery

Mark W. Parrino, M.P.A.
President
American Association for the Treatment of Opioid
Dependence (AATOD)

Susan P. Brown
Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer;
Director of Finance and Administration
The National Center on Addiction and
Substance Abuse

A. Thomas McLellan, PhD
Founder, Treatment Research Institute
Former Deputy Director, White House Office of National
Drug Control Policy

Chuck Ingolia
Sr. Vice President, Public Policy and
Practice Improvement
National Council for Behavioral Health

Alice Dembner
Program Director, Substance Use Disorders and Justice-
Involved Populations
Community Catalyst

Kelly J. Clark, MD, MBA,
President
American Society of Addiction Medicine

Grant Smith
Deputy Director
National Affairs of the Drug Policy Alliance

Kathryn Cates-Wessel
CEO
American Academy of Addiction
Psychiatry

Roberta Carlin, M.S., J.D
Executive Director
American Association on Health and Disability

Daniel Raymond
Deputy Director of Planning and Policy,
Harm Reduction Coalition

Gary Mendell
Founder and CEO
Shatterproof

Jim Hood, Co-Founder and CEO
Greg Williams, Co-Founder and EVP
Facing Addiction

Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NCAC II, CDC III, SAP
Executive Director
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

Emalie Hurliaux, MPH
Director of Federal & State Affairs,
Project Inform
Chair, California Hepatitis Alliance

Robert Heimer, PhD
Professor of Epidemiology, Yale School of Public Health
Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS

Pamela F. Rodriguez
President & CEO
TASC, Inc. (Treatment Alternatives for
Safe Communities)

Shira Shavit, MD
Executive Director, Transitions Clinic Network
Associate Clinical Professor, UCSF

Hollis Pickett
President
Local Area Support For Hepatitis (LASH)

Derek Hodel
Interim Executive Director
Drug Policy Alliance

Wendy Armstrong, MD
Chair of the Board, HIV Medicine
Association

Wayne Wirta
President/ CEO
NCADD-NJ

Tim Clement
Senior Policy Advisor
The Kennedy Forum

Justin Luke Riley
President
Young People in Recovery

Nancy Rosen Cohen
Executive Director , Maryland Chapter
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug
Dependence

Thomas Miller
President
Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare

Alison Oliveto, Ph.D.
Program Director, Clinical Trials
Innovation Unit
Translational Research Institute
Professor and Vice Chair for Research
Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences
Director, Center for Addiction Research
University of Arkansas for Medical
Sciences

Jason Grebely BSc PhD
Associate Professor
Kirby Institute, UNSW Australia
NHMRC Career Development Fellow
President
International Network on Hepatitis in
Substance Users (INHSU)

David C. Perlman, MD
Professor of Medicine and Chief,
Infectious Diseases , Icahn School of
Medicine at Mount Sinai
Chief, Infectious Diseases, Mount Sinai
Beth Israel

Henry R. Kranzler, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry
Director, Center for Studies of Addiction
University of Pennsylvania
Perelman School of Medicine

Richard Hawks, PhD
Deputy Director, Division of Treatment
Research and Development , Retired
National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH

Marguerite Beiser, ANP-BC
Director of HCV Services
Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program

Avik Chatterjee, MD
Physician, Boston Health Care for the
Homeless Program
Instructor, Harvard Medical School

Lois Petty
SEP Site Manager
SLO Bangers Syringe Exchange and Overdose Prevention
Program

Scott Burris
Professor and Director
Center for Public Health Law Research
Temple University Beasley School of Law

Amanda Latimore, PhD
Director of Social Epidemiology and Evaluation
Behavioral Health System Baltimore

Hannah Watson MD
Maternal Child and Reproductive Health
Fellow
University of New Mexico Hospital

Adam Brooks, PhD
Director, Treatment Research Institute
Public Health Management Corporation

Keith Brown, MPH
Director, Health & Harm Reduction
Katal Center for Health, Equity, and
Justice

Jerry Douglas MD
Chief Medical Officer
Hillside Health Center

Bruce G. Trigg, MD
Addiction medicine and public health
consultant

Tom Coderre
Senior Advisor
Altarum Institute

Cyndee Clay
Executive Director
HIPS

Victor Capoccia
Former Team Leader, Addiction
Prevention and Treatment
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Kathleen O'Brien, PhD
President
The Maryland Addictions Directors
Council

Paul Pentel
Director, Division of Clinical Pharmacology
Hennepin County Medical Center

Matt Slonaker, JD
Executive Director
Utah Health Policy Project

Annie Herriott, M.S., MSW
Doctoral Candidate
Boston University School of Social Work

Orlando Chavez
Health Systems Navigator, HIV/HepC Prevention and
Harm Reduction Services
GLIDE

Elizabeth Spradley,
Nurse
Johns Hopkins Hospital

Brendan Saloner, PhD
Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management,
John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
(on behalf of self, not institution)

Jo L. Sotheran, PhD
MARS Project