

COALITION TO
**STOP OPIOID
OVERDOSE**

February 8, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
United State Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
United States Congress
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
S-221, The Capitol
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
H-204, The Capitol
United States Congress
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose, the undersigned organizations are writing to ask that as Congress contemplates health insurance market reforms, any changes preserve access to treatment services and recovery support programs for individuals struggling with addiction or mental illness.

The Coalition to Stop Opioid Overdose is a coalition of diverse organizations representing health care and social service professionals and advocates united around common policy goals that will lead to meaningful and comprehensive policies to reduce opioid overdose deaths through prevention, treatment and recovery support services.

In the face of the opioid overdose and suicide epidemics, equitable access to a full continuum of mental health and substance use disorder treatment services, including medications to treat addiction and mental illness, must be an essential component of health care coverage. It is also critical that addiction and mental illness be covered on par with other medical conditions, by ensuring full implementation of parity and patient safeguards consistent with the *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008*, and extensions of this law and expanded coverage provided under the *Affordable Care Act*. Recent [analyses](#) have estimated that about 2.8 million Americans with a substance use disorder, including 222,000 people with an opioid use disorder, and an additional 1.25 million people with mental illness could lose some or all of their insurance coverage if benefit protections are not included in health reform efforts. These protections are vital to ensuring access to treatment that can improve long-term outcomes for men and women as well as lead to healthier and more resilient families and communities.

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Ensuring Americans have access to addiction and mental health treatment is not only the right thing to do – it's the cost-effective thing to do, yielding a return on investment that will benefit employers and our economy. For example, according to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#), every dollar spent on the treatment of mental illness results in \$3 - \$5 in new economic contributions and years of healthy life. In addition, the recent [Surgeon General Report on Alcohol, Drugs and Health](#) found that every \$1 spent on addiction treatment saves \$4 in health care costs and \$7 in criminal justice costs.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that recent gains made toward improving access to addiction and mental health treatment in the *21st Century Cures* and *Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act* laws will be preserved and enhanced as reforms are considered for both the health insurance market and Medicaid program.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Nurse Practitioners
American College of Emergency Physicians
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Correctional Association
American Nurses Association
American Psychiatric Association
American Society of Addiction Medicine
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nursing
California Consortium of Addiction Programs & Professionals
Central City Concern
Children and Family Futures
CleanSlate
Facing Addiction
HIV Medicine Association
Illinois Association for Behavioral Health
Indivior
International Nurses Society on Addictions
National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists
National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Safety Council
Valley Hope
Young People in Recovery

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CC

The Honorable Orrin Hatch

The Honorable Ron Wyden

The Honorable Lamar Alexander

The Honorable Patty Murray

The Honorable Greg Walden

The Honorable Frank Pallone

The Honorable Kevin Brady

The Honorable Richard Neal